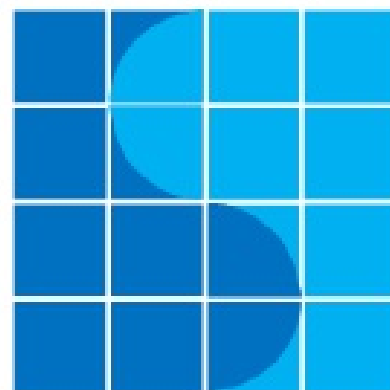


Trajectories

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Chair's Message

Towards New Interactions of (Historical) Time and (Comparative) Space

Fatma Müge Göçek
University of Michigan

I want to thank you all once again for electing me the chair of the section; I am very honored. The *Trajectories* team has done an excellent job in putting together the Fall 2018 issue, discussing some of what transpired in the subfield of comparative historical sociology during the last annual meeting. Specifically, two sessions are highlighted: one on the sociology of slavery and the *longue durée* honoring Orlando Patterson, and the other on the logics and lived

experience of politics, culture, and economics in the American Rust Belt. In addition, there is coverage of the 2018 CHS Mini-Conference and the 2018 Mentoring Event carried out with the Transnational and Global Sociology Section.

Thinking about what to write here took me back to my graduate student years in the 1980s when I first joined the CHS section as a young sociologist-in-the-making from Turkey. Theda Skocpol's structural model was still the rage, gradually counterbalanced

Page 3	Orlando Patterson: The Sociology of Slavery in the <i>Longue Durée</i> , by Herman Paul, Fiona Greenland, Renisa Mawani, George Steinmetz, and Orlando Patterson
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by William Sewell Jr.'s interpretivist approach to the past and other societies. The nature of my research in the Ottoman archives made me more attuned to the Sewell take and I still remember the excitement with which I attended ASA during that decade as we saw the world through those frameworks. In the 1990s and 2000s, the comparative dimension of the section never managed to go beyond the West so I withdrew for a while into the Middle Eastern Studies Association where I found more resonance with my work.

What I at the time regarded as the parochialism of ASA and CHS section in particular gradually waned away in the aftermath of 9/11 as we probably realized how much knowledge and experience outside the United States mattered, first in generating the attack on the Twin Towers and later the US interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. The debacles of these wars forced me to bring the Middle East more and more into my sociology courses. What ensued was my ability to develop a more critical sociological approach not only to the Middle East or the United States, but to the world at large.

Such a critical approach has also gained more traction in the field of sociology, as evinced by analytical frameworks developing around post/decoloniality, neoliberalism, and the like. In the decade of the 2010s, this critical approach has led to a sociological refocus on the intersections of (comparative) space and (historical) time, literally highlighting once again the two fundamental parameters of our section. I used the term 'refocus' because this intersection is very different from our earlier heyday in the 1980s when the unit to study was almost always nation-states; categories of analysis based on the Western historical experience alone were not vetted; and social facts were often not contextualized. Now, units of analysis can comprise social actors, groups, objects; origins of the categories of analysis are carefully articulated; and all aspects of research are critically embedded. Hence, time and space play a very significant role in especially destabilizing

naturalized and normalized social relations often laden with social power.

"...we are just beginning to discover what new analytical insights the intersections of historical time and comparative space have yet to yield... Time and space are on our side"

The 'comparative' no longer indicates nation-states, but can also refer to various social groups and elements within one society or across numerous societies or communities. And as the comparative intersects with the 'historical,' the focus shifts to the analysis of social processes rather than anachronic single moments in time, and to the systematic study social contexts and social spaces where multiplicity of meanings are generated continually. In my own work, for instance, I no longer focus on the Ottoman Empire or the Turkish Republic, but rather on the historical transformation of society over two hundred years; not on state documents alone but rather on memoirs to capture the spectrum of interpretations over time; not on the social phenomenon of revolution, but rather on collective violence across time and space. I found that by doing so, I was more able to capture the informal experiences of all the people, including minorities instead of being limited to the formal knowledge that is so often presented, promoted and reproduced by the state.

I think we are just beginning to discover what new analytical insights the intersections of historical time and comparative space have yet to yield. I am also sure that our studies will chart the future not only of comparative historical analysis, but the field of sociology at large. Time and space are on our side, so let us move forward as trailblazers!

Orlando Patterson:

The Sociology of Slavery in the Longue Durée

ASA 2018 Panel



Illustration by Tony Rodriguez

This report is the result of the 2018 ASA Panel of the same title. The panel featured John Bodel, Fiona Greenland, Renisa Mawani, and Michael Ralph; where George Steinmetz and Orlando Patterson acted as discussants. We present here the authors' summary of their contributions (except for Michael Ralph's). The conversation greatly advances our understanding of the sociology of slavery.

Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideologies: Orlando Patterson and M. I. Finley among the Dons

John Bodel
Brown University

In 1978, shortly after arriving in Cambridge to undertake a visiting fellowship at Wolfson College, Orlando Patterson accepted an invitation to tea from Moses Finley, Professor of Ancient History and Master of Darwin College, and thus began a series of conversations about slavery over the following year that would ultimately enrich the work of both men. Patterson was at the time immersed in writing a first draft of *Slavery and Social Death*. Finley was completing the four lectures he would deliver at the end of the year at the Collège de France, which were published two years later under the title of the first and most important of them, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*.

Patterson has acknowledged the influence of Finley's work and the benefit of his conversations with Finley in that year specifically, first in *Slavery and Social Death* (xii, 7,) and often thereafter (e.g. Scott 2013: 216-17; Patterson 2017: 265). Finley, as far as I can find, had not cited Patterson's work before they met, but he had read and admired Patterson's survey of scholarship on slavery for the *Annual Review of Sociology* in 1977, and he would go on (after reading and critiquing a first draft of Patterson's manuscript) to praise the final version of *Slavery and Social Death* (Patterson 2017: 265) and to recommend it to his students and colleagues, an endorsement, as

Patterson has observed, that did much to ensure a favorable reception of the work by classicists (Scott 2013: 217). The aim instead of this brief essay is to consider the ways in which the exchange of ideas between Patterson and Finley in 1978 and 1979 contributed to and in a certain sense instantiated a changing of the guard in the way that ancient historians incorporate sociological methods into their thinking about slavery in the classical world.

To oversimplify, in the early 1980s the interest of ancient historians in slavery shifted away from external economic questions and an almost obsessive focus on the slave as laborer and the place of slavery in ancient “modes of production”, to investigation of internal sociological and psychological aspects of the institution such as the workings of slave households, manifestations of slave-owning ideology in classical culture, and the inner lives of Greek and Roman slaves. Finley, in his teaching as much as in his writing, was instrumental in turning the lens away from “class” as a tool of critical analysis toward a more contextualized investigation of the internal dynamics of slavery as an institution, but the lectures he delivered at the College de France reveal him still to have been an active combatant in ideological battles that were even then fading into obsolescence, as the Soviet Union began its decade-long descent into the final dissolution that began with the Polish elections of June 1989.

Since the publication of *Slavery and Social Death*, the concepts of natal alienation and social death have become embedded in the theoretical apparatus of virtually all students of ancient Mediterranean society, and Patterson’s ideas not only about the social dynamics of slavery but about freedom as an expression of relations to power (1991) have become common currency in the discourse among classicists and ancient historians across the sub-disciplines. It is therefore worth exploring briefly how both concepts may relate to ideas about the classical world that Patterson would have encountered

during his interactions with Finley. About the first, Patterson himself has been explicit. In the long interview he gave to anthropologist David Scott in 2010 and 2011, when asked directly about the genealogy of the concept of social death, Patterson mentioned first Moses Finley, who had elaborated an idea of the slave as quintessential outsider first expounded by the French sociologist of law Henri Lévy-Bruhl (1931), son of the better-known anthropologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl; then, the work of French anthropologist Claude Meillassoux and his team on the Toureg of the Sahel (1975), who spoke of slaves as symbolically dead (cf. Patterson 1982: 4-5); and finally a theoretical construct of Roman law (the inspiration of Levy-Bruhl’s disquisition), which treated slaves as legally dead, and a cultural practice of the Caribs, whose slaves cut their hair in the fashion of persons in mourning (Scott 2013: 219-220; cf. Patterson 1982: 60). The concoction, in other words, was eclectic, drawing on classical Roman law and some theoretical reflections refined from it, ethnographic comparison, and what might be called personal experience, or at least familiarity, with life in the Caribbean, and it rested on a solidly triangulated base of legal, linguistic, and behavioral evidence and argument.

“...in the early 1980s the interest of ancient historians in slavery shifted away from external economic questions ... to investigation of internal sociological and psychological aspects of the institution...”

A similarly mixed genealogy underlies one of the fundamental tenets of *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture*, that slavery and freedom are intimately connected. Patterson had read in graduate school Finley’s seminal essay of 1959, “Was Greek civilization based on slave labour?”, in the final paragraph of which Finley noted a correlation between more advanced city states and more extreme types of forced labor (Finley

1959: 164 [1982: 113]; cf. Scott 2013: 217). Finley reminded readers that “individual freedom” in this context, meant civic freedom, which in Greek city states belonged only to adult male citizens, and he seized on Nietzsche’s observation that the Greeks regarded both labor and slavery as “a necessary disgrace, of which one feels ashamed, as a disgrace and a necessity at the same time” to make the point that only the most extreme form of forced labor (chattel slavery) provided male citizens with the leisure time they needed to exercise their civic freedom and to satisfy their ideological prejudices. This seed of an idea, planted in Patterson’s mind in graduate school, took root in recollections of his own experience as a colonial boy growing up in Jamaica at a time when school children on Empire Day still sang the anthem “Rule Britannia”, with its curiously defiant refrain, “Britons never, never will be slaves!”, and eventually blossomed forth in *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture* in the formulation of a tripartite construct of freedom consisting of three aspects—the personal, the sovereign, and the civic—which Athenians developed at the end of the 6th century BCE precisely out of the lived experience of slave women, whose complete subjugation poignantly highlighted the desirability of an opposing state. Comparison of the phenomenon with other cultures here provided not confirmation of universality but proof of historical particularity in the precise socio-political circumstances of the later Athenian empire that created the right alchemy for this trichordal concept of freedom to develop (cf. Scott 2013: 227-28).

Neither Finley nor Patterson restricted a concern with social issues to academic discourse; both engaged actively in the political and social debates of the day, but Finley was never able to integrate his academic activity with his social advocacy in the way that Patterson has from the beginning harmonized the two, nor (it seems) was he inclined to draw on his life experience to guide his scholarly investigations. One might say that Finley’s scholarly interests motivated his political and social activism rather than the

reverse, as (it could be argued) is the case with Patterson. Finley was equally unsentimental about tools of historical research and even historical questions, which had always to be relevant to contemporary concerns. He had no time for arguments and methodologies that had outlived their usefulness.

In one of the last essays Finley wrote on the topic of slavery, published in 1979, he identifies as a turning point in slavery studies the flood of innovative scholarship on American slavery that followed the publication of Kenneth Stampp’s *The Peculiar Institution* in 1956. He recognizes that what he calls “the terrible reality and urgency of contemporary black-white tensions in the United States” make inevitable a suffusion of ideological bias throughout this scholarship, and he seems to revel in the transparency of the presuppositions and motivations that are thus candidly exposed (Finley 1998: 285-90). He could also see that investigating the psychosocial world of the slave, fraught as it must be with ideological pitfalls, opened windows into understanding the workings of the entire system that were impenetrable to the analytical tools of the Frankfurt School. In the hierarchy of methodological approaches, Marxism retains its place at the head of the table (1998: 295), but the center of conversation, and with it Finley’s interest, have moved on. At the end of his essay, Finley returns to the idea of the slave as outsider, with its concomitant attribution of inferiority—a prejudice, he maintains, that was “psychologically necessary to the slaveholder class”. “That is the area—”, he says in closing, “the psychology and ideology of slavery—which seems to me most urgently in need of continued inquiry, more than the economics of slavery. The economics belongs to the dead past, the psychology to the living present.” (1998: 308).

With that envoi, one of his last pronouncements on the study of slavery and one of his few predictions of the path future research might follow, Finley effectively passed the mantle of the comparative study of slavery to Patterson, who even then was completing the landmark

study that would lay down the first broad tracks in the new territory Finley saw as the next frontier. For Finley, the historian's task, whatever the period or place, was always to address the living present. Patterson, the sociologist, draws important insights about slavery and freedom in the contemporary world in part from close attention to the past. It is the interplay between the two, and the conceptual clarity that can result from their reasoned comparison, that makes Finley's work exciting to read even when the debates it engages are no longer relevant, and it is what continues to make Orlando Patterson's writing, not only on historical sociology but on more contemporary and pressing issues, illuminating as well as essential reading for classicists and ancient historians today.

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Second Populations and the Cultural Process of Parasitic Dishonor

Fiona Greenland
University of Virginia

Slavery and Social Death made a number of theoretical and methodological achievements, and they can be summarized variously, but the signal contribution is this: Patterson provided us with a definition of slavery that is not bound by economics alone. In his classic statement, slavery is "the permanent, violent domination of natally alienated and generally dishonored persons" (Patterson 1982). For comparative and historical sociologists, this definition opened up a vast horizon of thought wherein enslavement is conceived as *socially* relational, rather than (only) legally relational, and wherein it achieves domination by psychological as well as physical mechanisms (Patterson & Zhuo 2018; Reed 2013; Scheidel 2017). One of the most theoretically challenging of these mechanisms is *parasitic social dishonor*. In his afterword in *On Human Bondage*, Patterson explains what he means by it:

"The dishonor the slave was compelled to experience sprang [...] from that raw, human sense of debasement inherent in having **no being except as an expression of another's being.**" (*Slavery and Social Death* 1982: 78; my emphasis.)

The essence of this relationship is parasitism. The free person is the parasite, drawing his or her social honor from the dishonoring of the enslaved person. In fact, the free person's standing *depends on* the availability of that dishonored populace. Easily summarized, the concept has been criticized for an apparent paradox: how can "generally dishonored persons" serve as a source of honor? The same problem was identified by Hegel, who pointed to a "crisis of honor" experienced by the master when he confronted the inconceivability of drawing honor from a degraded person who lacks the capacity to confer it in return (Patterson 2017: 280-1).

In building this particular aspect of his argument, Patterson relies on evidence from ancient Rome, and this focus explains why much of the criticism of parasitic social dishonoring has come from classicists. Ancient historians Mary Beard and Kyle Harper, in explicit engagement with Patterson's work, affirm his argument that Roman slaves were outside the system of social recognition. Being dispossessed of legitimate honor, and utterly stripped of the resources necessary to participate in the "game of honor," as Harper phrases it, slaves cannot be a source of social honor for free persons in that game (Harper 2011: 36). Patterson himself seems to suggest something similar, writing in *Slavery and Social Death* that the slave "usually stood outside the game of honor" (Patterson 1982: 11). Beard goes a step further, arguing that Patterson's conception of the enslaved person as socially dead is fundamentally incompatible with the production of honor because social death means *permanent* exile from the field of honor (Beard 2012). She points to funerary monuments of manumitted Roman slaves to ask how these depictions of individuals sustain the idea that

slaves were only ever an extension of the master. Commemorative monuments were culturally central in Roman society, which obsessed over memory and death rites (D'Ambra & Métraux 2006). If we insist on social death as a definitive condition of slavery, commemorative monuments mark the transition between continuums of freedom and enslavement, honor and dishonor, and lives lived or aspired to.

We have apparently hit the interpretive wall: How did parasitic dishonoring, with its "extended self" in the master-slave relationship, accommodate commemorative expressions of enslaved persons' individuality? How is social death compatible with honor? Patterson's response has been to reiterate the institution of slavery as an honorific relationship – an honor-generating social machine, we might say. This gets us closer to what the dispute about parasitical social dishonor is actually about, namely, two sharply contrasting theories of the social. One vision of the social, the one suggested by Beard, Harper, and possibly Hegel himself, is that social death and social honor are ontologically fixed. The other, articulated by Patterson, is that social death and social honor are ontologically processual, or materially relational to structures of domination and culture. To reveal the workings of these structures, Patterson expands the analysis beyond the master–slave dyad and into the complex messiness of the rest of society, the "large group of free persons who were not slave-holders and who often had to labor for their living" (Patterson 2017: 280). This group comprises the freed and freeborn, rich and poor and in-between, and they, too, played a role in the structuring and reinforcement of social status and social honoring. As illustration, Patterson presents the idea of social triangulation. Slavery solved the problem of honor it created for the master by its concurrent invention of the status of freemen. It was, he writes, "the neatest of all social triangulations, and for the West, one of the most portentous" (Patterson 1982: 10). This was so because the master and *all non-slaves* gained at the expense of the slave's degradation—their

collective honorific gains came by virtue of this simple negation, giving them a particular social status, the freeman. It is a characteristic feature of this middle group that it is variegated, encompassing freeborn and freed, rich and poor, and variously honored. That is how power works in a hierarchical society dominated by a small group of elites. Distinctions within this middle group are in flux, not so much open to contestation as open to *interpretation* and experience. By enhancing those “collective honorific gains” and by re-creating them as free men, this social group acquired “a vested interest in the state of slavery, and a debt of honor to the all-powerful slave-holder class with whom they felt, as free men, a bond of solidarity” (Patterson 1982: 334).

But there are a lot of big questions remaining. How can collective honorific gains be acceptable to the non-master free any more than to the masters if everyone is operating within the same system of social valuation? And if it is agreed that the way out of this impasse is to allow slaves and ex-slaves a modicum of standing, the better sustenance for the parasites, how can this happen without threatening the honor of the non-master free? Finally, what were the mechanisms by which non-master free and enslaved were structurally separated? This is important because the master class was tiny, and needed to ensure their superiority over a much larger population of mid-free, free-poor, and enslaved. Marxist theory posits the creation of the bourgeoisie and their cultural fetishes (including religion) as a weapon of occlusion that blinds all non-masters to their true predicament – alienation from labor – by drawing their attention to cultural, racial, ethnic, and national distinctions. That explanation omits interpretation, or the capacity of individuals to take from cultural creations the signals, meanings, and practices that support her actions as she navigates the social world. To answer these questions, I will engage with the same empirical material mobilized by Beard and Harper and show that commemorative monuments offer a window onto an elusive aspect of a slave society: relations among the

low-born, enslaved and free, constituting a phenomenon I refer to as reciprocal status leveling, in which the standing of slaves and ex-slaves is acknowledged but always within the confines of power relations that ensure the cooperation of the non-master free with the masters’ projects (Reed 2018 on projects).

Empirical Choice and Theoretical Historicizing: How to Study Collective Honorific Gains

Patterson’s theory of collective honorific gains is rooted in the evidence from ancient Rome. Epistemologically, he was interested in Roman *libertae*, or ex-slaves, because they present the first known instance of a group of people taking public pride in their status as ex-slaves. One aspect of this collective pride was the deployment of an iconography and nomenclature that embraced that social status. Such was the pervasiveness of human enslavement under Rome that all dimensions of social life were affected by it, shaping even those relationships and identities that did not have any direct involvement with slaves and masters. Rome, in sum, is the paradigmatic case of a slave society, offering the definitional features of a doulotic system.

“But there are a lot of big questions remaining. How can collective honorific gains be acceptable to the non-master free any more than to the masters if everyone is operating within the same system of social valuation?”

Theoretically, Patterson was interested in persistent patterns of power and domination through time, with Rome featuring as a key originary point for later ideas about slavery. If the case’s temporal remoteness seems beyond reach for comparative and historical sociologists, Patterson demonstrates its relevance for

contemporary theory building. His analytical method is to treat each of his sixty-six cases as a social system (a smaller set of which he labels *slave societies*), and to look within each system for formal and informal mechanisms that sustained the necessary arrangements of absolute domination. Social relations are central to these arrangements. In insisting on this, Patterson offers a form of *longue durée* analysis in which underlying patterns and structures of slavery are traced via specific social settings and historical moments. I stress his methodological novelty, his own form of *longue durée*, because by breaking with conventions of comparative and historical sociology in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Patterson effectively anticipated two important developments in long-term historical analysis. These two strains of work are *deep history* and *transtemporal history*. The conception of antiquity for late modern society in Patterson's book deserves closer scrutiny for what it implies about how we, as sociologists, choose our cases, but first it is important to explain the main objectives with which deep and transtemporal history are concerned.

There are considerable methodological challenges in trying to trace the long history of collective honorific gain as an individual experience. As many other scholars have pointed out, when it comes to the study of slavery we have a historical record dominated by the voices of the elite, with enslaved people's experiences buried in the stratigraphy. I don't think that we can recover "voices" through artifactual evidence, but I do think we can get at something fundamental about collective honor if we look at the funerary art. There is a way of looking at such material that is an appendage to the texts—as ornament or illustration of a point propounded by the written word. More methodologically promising, on the other hand, is a critical semiotic approach that takes the register of visual presentation as a fundamental aspect of social communication. There is a wider expressive and interpretive range in this register than in juridical texts, masters' memoirs, or philosophical treatises, all three genres being

prominent in studies of collective honor. Such texts, of course, also lend themselves to interpretation (and, via sociological scholarship, critical theoretical dissection). But what I'm getting at is a different kind of interpretation: of slaves and ex-slaves and freeborn and masters looking at the same funerary images and taking a range of signs and meanings for their own contributions to, and deductions from, collective honor. When it comes to Roman ex-slaves' perspectives and experiences, commemorative art offer the closest we get to an unmediated encounter with collective honorific gains, a phenomenon that is itself exquisitely dependent on semiotics and performance. Honorific status is all about who sees you having a certain status and how your claims on status are interpreted and accepted by other people.

With the empirical necessity of funerary art established, we need to consider their affordances for sociological theory: that works of art present us with diverse visual idioms and non-linguistic codes, extending beyond Locke's "compass of human understanding" and into the realm of sensation, perception, and feeling. For this reason, what we do with those idioms and codes has direct implications for our theoretical output. In commemorative art, subjects found a *resource* for representation, specifically for social representation that "allowed ordinary people to participate in the competitive world of Roman society in which statues in public places honored magistrates and generals" (D'Ambra and Métraux 2006: x). Although the presumption underlying earlier work on commemorative art was that it reinforced identities already constituted, more recent work by cultural sociologists has affirmed that this genre has a socially generative capacity, rather than (merely) a reflective one (Wagner-Pacifici & Schwarz 1991). Whether large-scale paintings of state ceremonies or mundane and everyday religious icons, artworks do not simply hold up a mirror to society, they galvanize people to think, act, and identify in particular ways (Zubrzycki 2013). In this way, we should understand visual evidence as fully invested in the ground work of social

action – constructing processes, we might call them. Any semiotic reading will need to contend with the gritty business of viewership, of everyday audiences looking at, thinking about, or just glancing at a distance the artworks that we tend to study with scrupulous attention.

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From Slave Revolts to Social Death

Renisa Mawani

University of British Columbia

Orlando Patterson's intellectual contributions to the sociology of slavery and to comparative historical sociology have been remarkable. His meticulous archival research, sharp theoretical formulations, and the ease with which he moves between disciplines are equally impressive. Despite the breadth and scope of his work, however, most assessments of Patterson's contributions center on *Slavery and Social Death*. In this commentary, I place this book in conversation with his earlier work on slavery in Jamaica, a juxtaposition that may invite new questions while offering a greater appreciation for the subtleties of Patterson's arguments (1).

Slavery and Social Death is a wide-ranging global comparative survey of slavery across time, space, and continents. Published in 1982, Patterson's objective was to provide a broad synthesis and ask a series of questions as to what, if anything, was universal about slavery. Drawing from Marx, Weber, Hegel, and from traditions in anthropology and history, Patterson offers a breathtaking examination of slavery in 66 slave-owning societies. *Slavery and Social Death* is groundbreaking for many reasons, including its scope, reach, and argumentation. Specifically, Patterson eschews conventional claims that property is the best way to study slavery, and focuses instead on its cultural and symbolic dimensions. He defines slavery as "the permanent, violent domination of natally alienated and generally dishonored persons" (2). Racism, Patterson argues, is what produced

social death, a condition that “persisted long after the abolition of individual property rights in persons, in the slave culture known as Jim Crow” (3).

Since its publication, *Slavery and Social Death* has inspired lively discussion in sociology and beyond. Engagements with Patterson’s concept of social death have been folded into debates on structure and agency, domination and resistance, and into discussions of what can be said of black lives, historically. For critics, social death serves as a convenient shorthand, one that glosses the myriad power relations through which slavery was established as a social, political, and legal form (4). For others, Patterson’s formulations do not account for the rich and willful lives that enslaved women and men imagined and carved out from the most dire and unthinkable circumstances (5).

"Since its publication, *Slavery and Social Death* has inspired lively discussion in sociology and beyond."

There are always risks in extracting a single concept from a scholar’s intellectual production. Critiques of social death, and there are many, become curious when we place them within a longer trajectory of Patterson’s scholarship. Much of his early work – including *The Sociology of Slavery*, “Slavery and Slave Revolts,” and *Die the Long Day* – was aimed at documenting “the many complex ways in which slaves related to each other and defied attempts to destroy their humanity through many strategies of resistance from dissemblance to outright subversion and rebellion” (6). Given the biases of official archives, Patterson turned his attention to literature: “In the absence of historical records, one way to explore the inner lives of slaves is to exercise one’s literary imagination” (7). In light of his concerns with

subjectivity, how can social death be read and dismissed as a “theoretical abstraction”? (8) How might social death take on new angles, depths, and dimensions when situated within a longer arc of Patterson’s scholarship?

I

Published in 1967, and based on his PhD dissertation, *The Sociology of Slavery*, offers an impressive account of slavery in Jamaica, the place of Patterson’s birth. Drawing on three years of archival research, and weaving together traditions in sociology, law, and history, Patterson produces a stunning tapestry. *The Sociology of Slavery* provides a detailed analysis of the slave plantocracy in Jamaica, the demographics of enslaved communities, and the social institutions enslaved persons created. “Jamaica was the plantocratic society *par excellence*,” Patterson writes (9). Yet, in nearly 300 years of racial and colonial violence, slaves revolted in ways that were “passive,” “violent,” individual, and collective (10). By the 19th century, Jamaica had the highest number of revolts in any slave-owning jurisdiction in the British Empire.

To read *Slavery and Social Death* alongside *The Sociology of Slavery* and “Slavery and Slave Revolts,” an article Patterson wrote on the first Maroon war in Jamaica, invites a series of questions. Why did Patterson move empirically and conceptually from resistance and rebellion to social death? How could the slave, in his account, be conceived as insubordinate, defiant, and socially dead simultaneously? Working between the coercive power of the plantocracy and the willfulness of those enslaved, Patterson assigns a legal doubleness to the slave. “Slavery has been legally defined as ‘the status or condition of persons over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised,’” he explains. “What immediately becomes apparent in any consideration of this legal status is the peculiarly dual nature of the slave. On the one hand he was the property of another and was regarded as a disposable chattel.

But it was impossible to deny that he was also a human being and the law had to be cognisant of this fact in some way” (11). This dual status of the slave directs attention to Anglo law and the processes by which it produces persons and things (12).

In the historiography on slavery, property has held a prominent explanatory force and is one of the arguments that Patterson has challenged. In *Slavery and Social Death*, he argues that property “certainly has an important place in any discussion of slavery...but it is no way one of the constituent elements” (13). To view “slavery only as the treatment of human beings as property,” he contends “fails as a definition since it does not really specify any distinct category of persons” (14). In Patterson’s account, “there has never existed a slaveowning society, ancient or modern, that did not recognize the slave as a person in law” (15). But what he identifies as the “peculiarly dual nature of the slave” points to law’s undecidability, its inability to fully distinguish personhood from property, a point that requires further consideration.

Several scholars have criticized Patterson’s rejection of property as an explanation for slavery. For David Lewis, the problem is a definitional one. Patterson’s conception of property, he argues, is “sui generis, and very different from the standard understanding of property in modern legal theory” (16). Others have considered property in other registers. Cheryl Harris’s “Whiteness as Property” and Dylan Penningroth’s, *The Claims of Kinkfolk*, offer two distinct examples (17). The problems with property as an explanation for slavery may have less to do with competing definitions and more to do with the fact that definitions of property guide these discussions in the first place. Penningroth, for example, documents law’s limits in determining property. Some enslaved people “owned property even while they themselves were property,” he explains (18).

What would it mean to begin a discussion of

property with Patterson’s “peculiarly dual nature of the slave”? What if ambiguity and uncertainty are centered as features of law, ones that shaped the status of personhood and property both historically and in the present day? Oceans and slave ships, I suggest in the final section, offer a critical reorientation through which to rethink the slave as person and property. Natal alienation, abstraction, and commodification were instituted and defied aboard the slave ship and at sea (19).

II

The Sociology of Slavery begins with a dedication to C.L.R. James, one of Patterson’s early inspirations. Like many Caribbean writers to follow, James was well aware of the ocean and its significance to the transatlantic slave trade (20). “On the ships the slaves were packed in the hold on galleries one above the other,” he writes in the opening pages of *The Black Jacobins*. “Each was given only four or five feet in length and two or three feet in height, so that they could neither lie at full height nor sit upright.” The insurgencies “at the point of embarkation and on board were incessant, so that the slaves had to be chained, right hand to left leg, and attached in rows to long iron bars.” There was “no place on earth” that “concentrated so much misery as the hold of a slave-ship” (21).

Since the publication of *Slavery and Social Death*, scholars of transatlantic slavery have drawn critical attention to the middle passage as a time-space in which humans were transformed into things. What is particularly useful in these accounts, is that permanent violence and domination, natal alienation, and dishonor – the idioms that structure Patterson’s definition of slavery – were produced through practices of racial and seaborne terror, such as those described by James. In a well-known passage in “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe,” Hortense Spillers foregrounds the violence of the hold. “Those African persons in ‘Middle Passage’ were literally suspended in the ‘oceanic’...removed from the indigenous land and culture, and not yet ‘American’ either, these

captive persons, without names that their captors would recognize, were in movement across the Atlantic, but they were also *nowhere* at all” (22). Captains identified ship owners, slaveholders, and investors in ledgers and account books. Africans, by contrast were “reduced to the stark description of ‘negroeman,’ [sic], ‘negroe woman,’ or more frequently, ‘ditto man,’ ‘ditto woman’” (23). The most important maritime measurement was not the individual, but the aggregate (24). But even as African captives were transformed from humans to cargo, shipping companies, and slave owners depended on the preservation of life, labour, and value. Enslaved Africans were carefully inspected for physical strength and bodily health (25).

What Patterson identifies as the “peculiarly dual nature of the slave” was initiated aboard the slave ship and extended to the plantation and beyond. In the absence of slave laws, British colonial judges relied on the British common law, commercial and maritime law to oversee the transport and sale of African captives. This assemblage of sea, ship, and slave was extended to Britain’s American colonies and eventually inherited by an independent U.S. (26). Prior to 1807, when Britain abolished the slave trade in its colonies, all laws governing American involvement in transatlantic slavery focused on “ships, sailors, and investors” (27). The U.S. Constitution defined a slave as three-fifths of a person, but by the first half of the 19th century, the U.S. Supreme Court decided a series of cases that formally established the slave as property (28). British and American law cast the slave as person and property, a legal form that continues to endure in other ways.

The “peculiarly dual nature of the slave” that Patterson identified in his early writings on Jamaica may not be peculiar at all. Rather, it is an artifice of Anglo law, one that continues to shape contemporary jurisprudence through the legal personhood of corporations and in the ship as legal person (29). As legal artefacts, the slave, corporation, and ship demonstrate in different ways, that the analytic opposition

between property and personhood is legally produced and dissolved. Law’s power rests in its magical ability to turn humans into things, and things into persons, a point that Patterson acknowledges, and is up to others to develop (30).

Notes

(1) Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982); *The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development, and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica* (London: Rutherford, Madison, Teaneck, Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1967); “Slavery and Slave Revolts: A Socio-Historical Analysis of the First Maroon War Jamaica, 1655-1740,” *Social and Economic Studies*, 19(3), 1970: 289-325.

(2) Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 13.

(3) Orlando Patterson, “Revisiting Slavery, Property, and Social Death,” in John Bodel and Walter Scheidel (eds.), *On Human Bondage: After Slavery and Social Death* (Malden: Wiley, 2017), 281.

(4) Vincent Brown, “Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery,” *American Historical Review*, 114(5), 2009: 1233.

(5) There are differing perspectives on this. John Bodel argues that critiques of Patterson have been “misguided.” See John Bodel, “Death and Social Death in Ancient Rome,” in John Bodel and Walter Scheidel (eds.), *On Human Bondage: After Slavery and Social Death* (Malden: Wiley, 2017), 83; Patterson, “Revisiting Slavery,” 285.

(6) Patterson, “Revisiting Slavery,” 285.

(7) Orlando Patterson, “Preface,” *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Second Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, forthcoming), 2.

(8) Brown, “Social Death and Political Life,” 1233.

- (9) Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery*, 70.
- (10) Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery*, 260.
- (11) Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery*, 72, my emphasis.
- (12) Colin Dayan, *The Law is a White Dog: How Legal Rituals Make and Unmake Persons* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press).
- (13) Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 17.
- (14) Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 21.
- (15) Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 22.
- (16) David M. Lewis, "Orlando Patterson, Property, and Ancient Slavery: The Definitional Problem Revisited," in John Bodel and Walter Scheidel (eds.), *On Human Bondage: After Slavery and Social Death* (Malden: Wiley, 2017), 43.
- (17) Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review*, 106(8), 1993: 1710-1791.
- (18) Dylan C. Penningroth, *The Claims of Kinfolk: African American Property and Community in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 46.
- (19) Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Penguin, 2008).
- (20) Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wang (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010); Derek Walcott, 'The Sea is History' in Derek Walcott: *Collected Poems, 1948–1984* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1986).
- (21) C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (New York: Vintage, 1938), 8.
- (22) Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics*, 17(2), 1987, 72. See Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Saidiya Hartman, *Lose your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2008).
- (23) Philip, *Zong!*, 194.
- (24) Stephanie E. Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage From Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 68.
- (25) Sowande M. Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016).
- (26) Paul Finkelman, "Slavery in the United States: Persons or Property?" in Jean Allain (ed.), *The Legal Understanding of Slavery: From the Historical to the Contemporary* (2012), 105-134.
- (27) Finkelman, "Slavery in the United States," 121.
- (28) Finkelman, "Slavery in the United States." At the same time the U.S. Supreme Court was deciding cases on the status of slaves, they were designating ships as legal persons. See Renisa Mawani, "Archival Legal History: Towards the Ocean as Archive," in Markus Dubber and Christopher Tomlins (eds.), *Oxford Handbook on Legal History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 291-310.
- (29) Douglas Lind, 'Pragmatism and Anthropomorphism: Reconceiving the Doctrine of the Personality of the Ship' *U.S.F. Maritime Law Journal*, (2009-2010) 22(1): 39-121; Renisa Mawani, *Across Oceans of Law: The Komagata Maru and Jurisdiction in the Time of Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), especially chapter 2. For a useful discussion of slavery, personhood, and property see Stephen Best, *The Fugitive's Properties: Law and the Poetics of Possession* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).
- (30) Dayan, *The Law is a White Dog*, 10 & 12.

Orlando Patterson: The First Postcolonial Historical Sociologist?

George Steinmetz

University of Michigan

In addition to being a foundational historian and theorist of slavery and freedom, Orlando Patterson is one of the first postcolonial sociologists, standing alongside figures such as Abdelmalek Sayad, Albert Memmi, and Frantz Fanon. Patterson's approach to historical sociology germinated in conditions completely different from those of other American historical sociologists of his generation. The list of Patterson's main influences overlap little with the standard references in American historical sociology. Starting in the 1960s, Patterson's articles discuss James Baldwin, Frantz Fanon, and the philosophy and poetry of the Negritude movement, and his strongest literary influence was Albert Camus.

Patterson is the author of three novels, *The Children of Sisyphus* (1964), *An Absence of Ruins* (1967), and *Die the Long Day* (1973). His combination of fiction and sociological writing is unparalleled. Patterson explains that writing *Die the Long Day* was necessary preparation for writing *Slavery and Social Death* (1982), given the paucity of evidence about the psychological subjectivity of slaves. Only by first reading the novel and then the nonfictional historical sociology can we fully understand Patterson's argument in *Slavery and Social Death* and *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture* (1991). Reading the novel and the sociological text together avoids common misreadings, such as the ideas that Patterson ignores resistance or downplays internal relations among slaves, or that he overlooks intermediate roles between master and slave such as that of the freedmen. The revolutionary epistemological idea of connecting fiction and social science was only promoted by a small number of sociologists such as Michel Leiris, Jean Duvignaud, and Albert Memmi. Patterson was an acquaintance of George Lamming and other Caribbean writers and intellectuals, both in Jamaica and in Britain.

Patterson was a historian before becoming a sociologist, and this leaves strong traces on his work. His essay on the Morant Bay Rebellion won the prize for the best essay based on archival research awarded by the Jamaica History Teachers Association in 1957. As a member of the first cohort of students at the new University of the West Indies, Patterson was channeled from history into sociology, somewhat against his own wishes at the time. As he writes, it was a "foregone conclusion" for him that his sociology doctoral thesis at LSE would be a study of slavery in Jamaica, even if historical sociology as such didn't exist at the time. His thesis was based on three years of archival work in British and Jamaican archives. As Patterson notes, there was nothing like this form of historical sociology in British or US sociology at the time, nothing akin to the subfield that would come to be called Comparative and Historical Sociology. Patterson was forced to invent his own approach from scratch.

In his preface to the second edition of the *Slavery and Social Death*, Patterson alludes to the mismatch between his work and the main lines of historical sociology in the United States developing in the early 1980s. This book was published at a moment when American historical sociology "took a sharp turn toward the study of total societies, focusing on the state and collective actors ... with the aim of uncovering general causes of society-wide outcomes such as revolutions," he recalls, then observing that his approach was "completely out of sync with these developments," especially in its emphasis on the relational and institutional levels of sociocultural structures and its orientation toward "the early (rather than the later) Marx and, even more, Durkheim, his nephew Marcel Mauss, Weber's historical works, especially on religion," and the "classic works of comparative slavery" by Moses Finley and others. Patterson was also explicitly focused on culture. This approach, he writes, was "at variance with developments in historical sociology which, until recently, virtually discarded this foundational construct of the discipline."

Patterson's work was shaped by the personal experience of colonialism and the legacy of slavery. As Patterson writes, "slavery lingered" in language in Jamaica: "as children we described the dreaded postholiday return to school and its whip-happy teachers as 'our free paper burn,' a reference to the manumission certificate of freed slaves during slavery." His induction into sociology began at the University of the West Indies in Mona outside Kingston, when Jamaica was still a British colony. British postwar sociology, including ethnography, community studies, and the sociology of immigration and race relations, were invented in the colonies and imported back to the metropole. British historical sociology, by contrast, had a metropolitan, Northern, and global-western focus. Before moving to the US in 1970, Patterson was the major exception to this rule.

In his 1995 interview Patterson elaborated on his critical epistemology. First, he notes that in American sociology there "aren't many notable models for a Black or Mexican American or Puerto Rican trying to come to terms about his or her particular experience," and that the development of these models is hindered by the "positivistic effort to create sciences of the human experience." Patterson contrasts this current atmosphere with the "sixties and seventies," which was a "mini golden period of minority people really moving toward intellectual life and intellectual reflection." This was an epistemological "golden age," he suggests, since the "whole school of critical theory was a form of reflection" on "particular crises" which "didn't involve so vast a leap from the particular to the incomprehensibly general." Patterson concludes his 1995 interview with the "need for a return to a critique of positivism" and remarks that sociology at the time was "going through an interesting phase ... in the sense that there is dissatisfaction with the deadening sort of positivism of earlier years."

Patterson's foundational *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture* (1991) strongly exemplifies this anti-positivism. As John Bodell notes in his

contribution here, Patterson's analysis of the emergence of the tripartite construct of freedom does not provide "confirmation of universality" so much as "proof of historical particularity in the precise socio-political circumstances of the later Athenian empire that created the right alchemy for this trichordal concept of freedom to develop." This insistence on particularity is the hallmark of most historiography, and it was a watchword of the entire generation of German historical sociologists in the wake of Weber, who embraced an epistemology that combines explanation with attentiveness to the singularity (Rickert) and fluid processualism (Dilthey) of social life. Patterson's approach is compatible with this broadly historicist tradition, and with the critical realist philosophy of social science, which combines understanding or interpretation with explanation, and sees the latter as typically involving contingent concatenations of causes.

Patterson's work also raises the question as to why the US sociology discipline has largely ignored slavery. As Patterson pointed out in his response to the 2018 ASA panel, this refusal to engage with slavery is especially surprising in a discipline that seems to be preoccupied with injustice, oppression, and inequality. Lest we jump to the conclusion that the avoidance of slavery is a feature of American social science and humanities in general we need only look to history, anthropology, or English departments for counterevidence. There is something specific about sociology that makes it avoid slavery. Sociologists tend to perceive slavery, like colonialism and empire, as belonging to the past, and as therefore lying outside their discipline's ontological turf. But even if sociology is defined as the science of the present, we need to recognize that "the present is not the temporal present, it is what is still sufficiently alive to be the object of struggles," as Bourdieu insisted. Orlando Patterson teaches us that slavery is alive in its renewed forms and its lasting effects, and that these effects counterintuitively include freedom itself.

Notes

(1) Although Fanon was trained as a psychiatrist, he taught the first cohort of Tunisian sociology students at Tunis in 1960, and his writing in the second half of the 1960s was increasingly sociological. George Steinmetz, "Sociology and Colonialism in the British and French Empires, 1945-1965," *Journal of Modern History* 89:3 (2017), 601-648.

(2) See especially David Scott, "The Paradox of Freedom: An Interview with Orlando Patterson," *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 17:40 (2013), 96-242; Richard Williams, "Orlando Patterson Interview," *Sociological Forum* 10:4 (1995), 653-671; Donette Francis, "Cosmopolitan Patriots: West Indian Intellectuals Between Home and Metropole" (Ph.D. thesis, New York University, 2001).

(3) Orlando Patterson, "Baldwin as Stylist and Moralizer: Critical Assessment of the Essays of James Baldwin," *New Left Review* No. 26 (Summer 1964), 31-38; "Twilight of a Dark Myth: Assessment of the Social Philosophy and Poetry of Negritude," *The Times Literary Supplement* (Special Commonwealth Edition), No. 3316 (Sept. 16, 1965), 805-806; "Frantz Fanon. My Hope and Hero," *New World* 2:3-4 (1966), 93-95.

(4) See Albert Memmi, *La statue de sel: roman* (Paris: Corrêa, 1953); *Agar* (Paris: Corrêa, 1955); *Portrait du colonisé, précédé du Portrait du colonisateur* (Paris: Corrêa, 1957); on Memmi as writer and sociologist, see Jeanyves Guérin, ed., *Albert Memmi, écrivain et sociologue: actes du colloque de Paris X-Nanterre*, 15 et 16 mai 1988 (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1990).

(5) Scott, "The Paradox of Freedom," 118.

(6) "Preface, 2018," in *Patterson, Slavery and Social Death*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), viii.

(7) Interview by the author with Orlando Patterson, Cambridge, Mass., November 21,

2014.

(8) Patterson, "Preface, 2018," xi.

(9) *Ibid.*, xi.

(10) *Ibid.*, vii.

(11) George Steinmetz, "A Child of the Empire: British Sociology and Colonialism, 1940s-1960s," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 49:4 (2013), 353-378

(12) Williams, "Orlando Patterson Interview."

(13) Patterson, *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

(14) John Bodel, "Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideologies: Orlando Patterson and M. I. Finley among the Dons" (my emphasis).

(15) Frederick C. Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

(16) Pierre Bourdieu, "The Sociologist's Craft," in Pierre Bourdieu and Roger Chartier, *The Sociologist and the Historian* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 16.

American Sociology's Denial of Slavery

Orlando Patterson
Harvard University

I. Introduction

Consider the following six observations:

1. Slavery is one of the most foundational institutions in the history of the West (1).

2. Of all western societies, the United States has been most profoundly influenced by slavery, economically, socially, politically and culturally, its centrality recently re-emphasized by Jill Laporte (2) in her widely praised history of the nation.

3. One of, if not the most important social problem in the US today is the persistence of racial inequality and chronic racism, exacerbated in recent years with an openly racist president riding the backlash against the nation's first black president.

4. It is generally agreed that this problem originated in the nation's long history of slavery and the succeeding neo-slavery of Jim Crow. For this reason, academic work on slavery is flourishing in history, economics and all but one of the other social sciences (3).

5. Sociology is the academic discipline that is most involved with the problem of race and inequality. And yet, paradoxically, sociology is the discipline least concerned with the subject of slavery, a neglect that verges on contempt. Works on slavery rarely, if ever, appear in the pages of its leading journals. Graduate students steer clear of the subject. Other than myself, a Jamaican, I know of only four professional sociologists who currently work either directly or indirectly on American slavery (including the neo-slavery period) and its consequences or the role of slavery in the development of capitalism: Martin Ruef (4), Chris Muller and Deirdre Bloome (5), and John Clegg (6), an Englishman, which means that only three current American born sociologists have found the subject of American slavery worthy of study. The Berkeley sociologist Loic Wacquant certainly takes the subject of American slavery seriously, but he too is a foreigner, from France. So does George Steinmetz although his focus is on colonial and post-colonial studies. It is noteworthy that the great sociologist, W.E.B. Du Bois' foundational role in the discipline was, until very recently, shamefully neglected, along with his monumental work of historical sociology, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* published in 1935, one of the most important studies in the historical sociology of slavery and its afterlife. This neglect has, at last, begun to change thanks in good part to the work of Aldon Morris and a younger generation of scholars (7).

Race, let me hasten to add, has little to do with this strange disciplinary aversion. American sociologists of all ethnicities share this strange disciplinary blindness to slavery.

The remainder of this note briefly expands on these preliminary observations.

II. The Historical Significance of Slavery

It is becoming increasingly evident to historians that slavery was one of the foundational institutions of western civilization. Not only did the institution play a critical role in the Greco-Roman origin of the West, but at all the subsequent high points of its development. Long resisted by classical historians, a turning-point came in the 1960s with the work of the great classical scholar and historical sociologist Sir Moses Finley (8). It is now the established view that the answer to the title of his famous essay, "Was Greek Civilization Based on Slave Labor?" is a resounding "yes!" Not only was slavery essential to all aspects of the Athenian economy, but important too for the rise of freedom as central value and the attendant emergence of democracy.

Slavery rose to even greater importance in all periods of Roman history, from the era of the Twelve Tables right down to the collapse of the Western empire in the late fifth century, and remained important in Byzantium down to its demise in 1453. Slavery permeated all aspects of Rome except its military—its economy, bureaucracy, educational system, popular and elite culture, and religion (9).

It was within the context of Roman slave society that emerged the institution that was later to dominate and fashion Western civilization, Christianity, which was not only critically dependent on slaves and freedmen in its formation, but was profoundly influenced in its theology by the metaphor of slavery, Pauline Christological soteriology being largely an introjection of the experience of manumission from the social death of slavery, Jesus' crucifixion being symbolically reinterpreted as

the redemption fee (from Latin *redemptio*: to purchase out of slavery) paid for Cristian rebirth into spiritual freedom.

Early medieval Europe is no longer a dark age, its history lit up by remarkable methodological advances in the new science of the human past (10). Wherever that light shines we find the brutal face of slavery: Carolinian Europe, Norman England, 11th century Ireland, and the rise of the late medieval city states. The slave trade was a major economic source for several of the great renaissance states, especially Genoa and Venice, the latter running large slave plantations producing sugar in the Mediterranean islands which were the models for the slave systems that later emerged in the New World. Even where, as in Renaissance Florence, slavery was of only domestic significance it nonetheless loomed large in the consciousness and thought of elite Florentines, as I have recently argued (11).

The rise of the modern West, based on the Atlantic system, was largely made possible by the enslavement and sustained holocaust of 12 million Africans. Early capitalism depended heavily on the profits of the slave trade and New world sugar plantation slavery; later industrial capitalism, right down to the latter half of the 19th century was integrally involved with slave produced cotton (12). It is remarkable that grand historical sociology, though largely preoccupied with the rise of modern Europe, almost completely missed the mark in regard to the centrality of slavery in its development, in sharp contrast with European historical sociologists.

Slavery in the U.S. it is increasingly established, was critical not only for the development of its economy. The institution was also a vital factor in the rise of American democracy. It shaped the character of freedom as central value in America, defined blacks as the permanent internal outsiders, an inferior race whose blackness defined whiteness as a unifying cultural force (13). What ended in 1865 was individual, legally based slavery. After the radical interlude of Reconstruction, it was followed by the collective

post-juridical system of slavery known as Jim Crow which Du Bois long ago showed to be slavery by another name. This system formally came to an end only with the dismantlement of Jim Crow laws in 1965. The permeation of slavery in American history, society and culture was therefore deep, broad, foundational and lasting. American historical sociology is also completely in the dark about these fundamental developments.

Why then the resounding silence of sociology, compounded by its deliberate academic banishment of the few who have dared to study the institution of slavery and its persisting lineaments?

III. The silence of the sociological clan

First, it is important to note that this neglect and censorship of the subject is true only of American sociologists. In Europe the study of slavery has long been taken very seriously. One of my mentors, C.L.R James, the great Caribbean Marxist counterpart and contemporary of DuBois, holds a revered place among British and French sociologists, his classic work, *The Black Jacobins* (1938) on the Haitian slave revolt and its imbrication with the French Revolution, being still widely cited and taught. This is especially true, though not confined to, Marxist and neo-Marxian sociologists in view of the importance Marx attributed to slavery and the slave mode of production in his own historical sociology. It is reflected in the works of historical sociologists such as Keith Hopkins (my former colleague in sociology at the London School of Economics, later professor of ancient history at Cambridge University), Perry Anderson and Robin Blackburn. My own works on slavery have received far greater attention in Europe than in America, starting with my first book, *The Sociology of Slavery* in Jamaica. It is striking that, when it was first published in 1967, although written by a then relatively unknown young scholar just out of graduate school, the work was widely reviewed in both the academic and mass circulation British press, including a

favorable one by the eminent British historian, Eric Hobsbawm, in the *Manchester Guardian*. Very few American sociologists read, or even know of the existence of *The Sociology of Slavery*. So it is hardly surprising, though galling, that several *American* scholars have criticized me for not doing what I was among the first post-colonial scholars of any discipline to do: write a detailed, archival- based study of the lived experience of slaves: their social and cultural lives, psychological reactions, hopes, fears, and widespread resistance.

So why have American sociologists, in spite of their deep engagement with the problem of racism and racial inequality disdained the study of slavery? One reason is disciplinary parochialism: plain ignorance of developments in ancient, modern and economic history, including that of America, and of the remarkable new methodological breakthroughs that are revolutionizing our knowledge of the past.

"So why have American sociologists, in spite of their deep engagement with the problem of racism ... disdained the study of slavery?"

Closely related is what George Steinmetz has recently called the "pervasive presentism of American sociology," reflected in the temporal and regional parochialism of the papers published in the discipline's leading journals, the vast majority of which "usually do not indicate any era, period, or time frame, and are written in the sociological present tense," which "conveys an image of the social world as being governed by unchanging universal laws and logics of necessity ... the message is that the present is the same as the past, or that the past is simply not interesting" (14)

An important further reason is that slavery became entangled with changing ideological fads

and fashions in sociology. Up to the 1960s slavery was, indeed, considered an essential factor in explaining racism and the plight of black Americans. DuBois was in no doubt that the African-American "home was destroyed by slavery" (15). His work was still influential and black sociologists such as E. Franklin Frazier and Kenneth Clark as well as white scholars took the subject seriously in their work, as did Gunnar Myrdal in his influential magnum opus, *An American Dilemma*. This all came to a screeching academic halt with the now notorious leaked pamphlet by Daniel Patrick Moynihan who did no more than summarize what was then common knowledge: that slavery had a devastating impact on blacks both externally in its generation of racism, Jim Crow and segregation, and internally in its effects on black marital and familial relations. Nor was his language, which we now cringe at, any different from that used by sociologist, black and white, at the time. This was the heyday of functionalism and terms such as "deviance," "dysfunction," "pathology" were commonly invoked by both white and black sociologists and policy advocates on both the right and the left when describing problems of the lower classes of all ethnicities. However, the document came at the wrong time and was written by the wrong person (only a year earlier the black sociologist Kenneth Clark, whose work played a critical role in the Supreme Court's outlawing of school segregation, had used exactly similar terms in his book *Dark Ghetto*). The intellectual tide, however, had suddenly turned sharply away from Parsonian functionalism, and from historical and cultural explanations of social life. To complicate matters, Oscar Lewis' culture of poverty theory, first published in 1959, which had initially gained currency, was by the mid-sixties being denounced, along with Moynihan, as academic attempts to blame the victim. (It is worth noting that Lewis was a Marxist anthropologist who died while working in revolutionary Cuba, in violation of American laws). Thus culture became suspect among sociologists and the subject was largely dropped from sociological work on race and poverty from the mid-sixties to

its revival, on strictly enforced academic norms that excludes it as an explanatory factor in the study of race.

Alas, the study of slavery became smeared through a kind of intellectual guilt by association among sociologists, especially in light of Moynihan's rather heavy-handed attribution of black familial "pathology" to the direct effects of slavery without sufficient consideration of the nuances of continuity and the importance of interacting structural forces. This banishment of slavery from the explanatory tool-kit of sociologists was reinforced by parallel developments among historians studying slavery during this period. Partly motivated by the uproar over the Moynihan report, historians went on a massive revision of the, until then, common view that slavery had devastating consequences for black life. Very soon a new romanticized orthodoxy emerged that emphasized the wondrous ways in which black slaves, in spite of two and a half centuries of enslavement, the last 50 of which saw the brutal separation of couples from each other and of parents from their children, and the inhuman breeding of black bodies to meet the demands of the internal slave trade from the Old South to the new cotton belt (a subject on which Du Bois wrote forcefully), nonetheless created harmonious communities on the slave plantation sustained by nuclear, god-fearing families that rivaled modern suburban families in their stability and loving unity. The black historian John Blassingame's text, *The Slave Community*, (1972) became a best seller. Among white historians, Herbert Gutman's work on the *Black Family in Slavery and Freedom* (1976) became the *locus classicus* for those seeking support for the view that slavery left the black family unscathed. Indeed Gutman left a portrait of black slave women as models of Victorian primness. Fogel and Engerman's *Time on the Cross* (1974) although pathbreaking in its cliometric methodology and macroeconomic reinterpretation of the capitalistic nature of Southern slavery, also reinforced the view that slavery was non-destructive of the social lives of the slaves. The unintended effect of this new

historiography, as one skeptic has noted, was to write the role of the slavemaster and the sexual horrors of slavery, the double burden of female slaves as overworked laborers and rape victims, clean out of the accounts of Southern slavery. Nonetheless, it fitted squarely with the sharp structural, anti-cultural turn in the sociology of black life and poverty. Every sociologist of race now assumed that there was no need to consider slavery in the study of race and poverty; to the contrary, any such consideration immediately raised suspicion and the risk of being flattened with the trigger ready charge: blaming the victim. One sociologist, Frank Furstenberg Jr., after peeking into the new historiography, confidently informed the sociological community that slavery had nothing to do with the high rate of single parenting among the black poor. It was all about the present urban experience. It took a professional historian, Steve Ruggles, to demolish this presentist misstatement (17). Happily, two excellent young sociologists, Deirdre Bloome and Chris Muller, have finally awakened the discipline to the centrality of history for any understanding of the black family (18).

It is very likely that this view of the irrelevance of slavery carried over to the generation of scholars who ushered in the new wave of what John Goldthorpe has called "grand historical sociology" that emerged in the mid-to late seventies and early eighties, led by the scholars such as Theda Skocpol, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Peter B. Evans, Fred Bloc, Margaret Somers and others, under the inspiration of Barrington Moore's seminal book, *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Their manifesto, *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology*, edited by Skocpol, was published in 1984, two years after *Slavery and Social Death*, seventeen years after *The Sociology of Slavery*, and I was immediately left in no doubt about the fate of slavery, not to mention my own works, in this then hot new school of American historical sociology. On the rare occasion when the subject was mentioned, as in Wallenstein's first volume on *The Modern World System*, it was from

40,000 theoretical feet above the slow-motion genocidal horrors and grounded sociological terrain in which I worked—one mode of labor production, along with East European serfdom and Western wage labor, in the magnificent emergence of the modern world system. My own intellectual trajectory was completely at variance with this “grand” new vision. *Slavery and Social Death* was, of course, a very comparative work. But there all similarity ended, substantively, methodologically and theoretically, as George Steinmetz points out in his contribution to this volume.

The fundamental issue at stake here is the misguided failure of sociologists, both those who work on present problems and historically oriented ones, to recognize one of the most tragic complexities of oppression. This is the fact that oppression works both externally and internally, a commonplace among European Marxist and non-Marxist scholars such as Paul Willis (19). If a person is brutally abused as a child, the injuries linger not only in the scars on her flesh and the persisting presence of her abusers, but in the psychological wounds that often result in her own self-inflicted cuttings and suicidal urges. What is true of individuals holds equally for groups. If a people is brutally oppressed for several centuries, it is inevitable that their hurt, their rage and degradation are partly turned on themselves, in the tendency of those with some little power to turn upon those even more vulnerable. The abuse of children by their parents which I observed every day in my fieldwork among the slum-dwellers of Kingston, and experienced myself from my sadistic teachers at elementary school in rural, colonial Jamaica, are direct reflections of a system in which for centuries the lash was the primary motivation to work. The daily degradation that men experience, under slavery, in the post-emancipation canefields, as yard-boys and fast-food workers in the post-colonial and post-industrial economies, inevitably corrodes to a perverse masculinity in which men assuage their socio-economic impotence through the physical and sexual abuse of women and children. Among

the Jamaican working classes the favored male synonyms for fucking with a woman is to “beat” and to “lash” her. In the ghettos of America “running train” (gang-raping) on young girls is the height of masculinity. In Jamaica over 80 percent of children are being brought up by impoverished women. In America it is over 70 percent and rising. Bourgeois historians and sociologists cannot bear to face such horrors of self-injury. Instead we are presented with the romantic ennobling of the slave condition in which slavery is reinterpreted as a mere “predicament” nobly negotiated by the slave. I kid you not (20). Sociologists observe the homicidal, sexual and familial tragedies in the ghettos of Kingston, Montego Bay, Maryland and Chicago, and proclaim that it is only structural and external. It is indeed structural. Monstrously so. But history matters, as does culture, the mouth of history’s flow, which interactively bears down on the oppressed, both externally and internally, like a disgorging amazon.

Notes

- (1) See Thomas Piketty, (2014) *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 158-163; Orlando Patterson, (1991) *Freedom n the Making of Western Culture* (New York: Basic Books).
- (2) Jill Lepore (2018) *These Truths: A History of the United States* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co).
- (3) These are too numerous to mention, but see Sven Beckert (2015), *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (Vintage); Walter Johnson, (2017) *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge,MA; Harvard University Press); Edward Baptist (2016), *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books); Seth Rockman (2009) *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins)

- J.Inikori, S. Engerman, eds. (1992) *The Atlantic Slave Trade: Effects on Economies, Societies and Peoples in Africa, The Americas and Europe* (Duke University Press).
- (4) Martin Ruef (2014), *Between Slavery and Capitalism: The Legacy of Emancipation in the American South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
- (5) Deirdre Bloome & Christopher Muller (2015) "Tenancy and African American Marriage in the Postbellum South," *Demography* (2015) 52: 1409–1430.
- (6) John J. Clegg, "Credit Market Discipline and Capitalist Slavery in Antebellum South Carolina," *Social Science History*, Volume 42, Issue 2 Summer 2018, pp. 343-376.
- (7) Aldon Morris, *The Scholar Denied: W.E.B. DuBois and the Birth of Modern Sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press). A conference celebrating the foundational role of DuBois in sociology, inspired by Morris' book, was recently held at Harvard, organized by graduate students in sociology: *Scholarship Above the Veil: A Sesquicentennial Symposium Honoring W.E.B DuBois*, October 25-27, 2018. See also Christopher Muller. 2015. "Politics and Science in the Work of W. E. B. Du Bois," *European Journal of Sociology* 56: 407-412.
- (8) M.I. Finley (1999) *The Ancient Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press).
- (9) Walter Scheidel, ed. (2012) *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Economy* (New York: Cambridge University Press); K.R. Bradley (1987) *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- (10) Michael McCormick (2002) *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, AD 300-900* (New York: Cambridge University Press).
- (11) Orlando Patterson (2018) "Freedom, Slavery, and Identity in Renaissance Florence: The Faces of Leon Battista Alberti," in *The Oxford Handbook of Freedom*, D. Schmitz and C. Pavel, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press).
- (12) Eric Williams (1944/1994) *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press); Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade and the British Economy, 1660-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press); Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson & James Robinson, (2005) "The Rise of Europe: Atlantic Trade, Institutional Change and Economic Growth," *The American Economic Review*, 95(3): 5436-579. See also endnote 3 above.
- (13) Edmund Morgan (2003) *American Slavery, American Freedom* (New York: W.W. Norton).
- (14) George Steinmetz, "Arguments for a Comparative and Historical Sociology Section of the ASA," *Trajectories: Newsletter of the ASA Comparative and Historical Sociology Section*, Vol. 29, No.3, Spring 2018.
- (15) W.E.B DuBois (1899/1967) *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (New York: Schocken Books): p.196.
- (16) Frank F. Furstenberg Jr., Theodore Hershberg, John Modell (1975) "The Origins of the Female-headed Black Family: The Impact of the Urban Experience," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 6(2): 211-233.
- (17) Steve Ruggles, "The Origins of the African-American Family Structure," *American Sociological Review* 59(1):136-151.
- (18) Deirdre Bloome & Christopher Muller, (2015) "Tenancy and African American Marriage in the Postbellum South," *Demography* (2015) 52:1409–1430.
- (19) Paul Willis (1981) *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs* (New York: Columbia University Press).
- (20) See Vincent Brown, "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery," *American Historical Review* 114 (2009): 1231–1249.

Between Declension and Nostalgia

Bringing a Comparative Historical Gaze to the Logics and Lived Experiences of the American Rust Belt



Photo Credit: Jschnalzer (Wikimedia Commons, CC)

Amanda McMillan Lequieu
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Josh Pacewicz
Brown University

This article summarizes the ASA 2018 panel of the same title, which featured the two authors as well as Shannon Elibath Bell (Virginia Tech) and Colin Jerolmack (New York University).

Introduction

The day after the 2016 election, sociologists faced an “acute existential crisis,” according to then-ASA president Michele Lamont. Somehow, a group of people committed to tracing and defining the social problems of inequality, human capital, and economic transformation underestimated the systemic frustration, dislocation, and consequential political foment of working-class America. Lamont (2016) suggested that the results of the presidential election might “be interpreted as an expression of the white working class’s parallel move to

assert its worth as a group that perceives itself as playing by the rules while others “cut in line” (citing Hochschild 2016), and evidence of a growing “recognition gap” between liberal, coastal elites and the once-middle-class residents of marginalized America.

Any existential crisis was not for lack of existing scholarly research on the repercussions of the ‘rusting’ of America’s industrial corridors in the late 20th century. Indeed, sociologists have long analyzed the sudden decline of career employment for blue-collar workers in the industrial sector (e.g. High 2003; Dudley 1994) and the consequential rise of “precarious work” in the late 20th and early 21st centuries (e.g. Kalleberg 2009; Paret 2016), and a new generation of ethnographies offer windows into the personal devastation wrought by unemployment, outmigration, and cultural marginalization in the wake of community-scale transformations of employment (e.g. Hochschild 2016; Broughton 2015). Rather, it was the persistence, prevalence, and political implications of emotions linked with economic loss, disenfranchisement, racial anxieties, and/or cultural alienation in certain segments of working-class America that gave sociologists pause.

An invited session at ASA 2018 aimed to address these puzzles of contemporary industrial and post-industrial America. The Special Session, entitled “Between Declension and Nostalgia: The Logics and Lived Experiences of Politics, Culture, and Economics in the American Rust Belt,” moderated by Michael M. Bell (University of Wisconsin-Madison) brought into conversation four contemporary cases of post-industrial and re-industrializing extractive and manufacturing communities. These papers probed the complexities of individual and corporate experiences of how past and current economic relationships shape political engagement, cultural expectations, and narratives of blame. Shannon Elizabeth Bell (Virginia Tech) argued how certain historical events and processes have kept many Central

Appalachian coalfield residents quiescent in the face of increasing environmental and public health threats posed by mountaintop removal mining and other coal industry practices. Colin Jerolmack (New York University) offered a contemporary case of community acceptance of natural resource extraction in the case of fracking in northern Pennsylvania. Amanda McMillan Lequieu (University of Wisconsin) analyzed the long-term consequences of the evaporation of the steel commodity chain from both extractive and manufacturing communities in the upper Midwest. And Josh Pacewicz (Brown University) traced the process of political reorganization required by manufacturing decline in two small cities in Iowa. Individually, and then in an extended period of moderated discussion, these studies explored the synergies and differences between recognition gaps among former workers, property owners, and community members in cases across rural and urban contexts and extractive or manufacturing industries.

From these four distinct studies emerged two themes of particular interest to sociologists of comparative historical sociology. First, we discuss the ways in which economic processes shape non-economic, social relations. After all, people and their places often outlive economic development or disaster. Second, we contend that thinking historically about the relationship between place and economy helps us understand how long-term residents of both past and current industrial communities conceptualize blame and responsibility. In the remainder of this essay, we expand these two theoretical frameworks for understanding contemporary political economies and political praxes of the American Rust Belt, and then draw from our individual studies to illustrate our contributions.

The Place of Historical Capitalism

First, the processes of capitalism not only take place; they make place. A central tenant of comparative historical analysis is that social objects are shaped by their genesis, as Steinmetz

(2017) argued. Each case study in this Special Session exemplified how past expressions of economic power continue to shape contemporary social life.

Place is space filled with the social stuff of life—a geographical location imbued with economic histories, social relationships, and cultural landmarks. Place is constituted not only by what is internal to it, but by its distinct lines of connection to other parts of the world (Massey 1995; Castells 1989). How much more so in natural resource extraction and manufacturing industries. In much of the American industrial corridor, places were or are connected to other places because of what they offer economically. The process of commodification of land, labor, and the raw and manufactured materials creates markets, infrastructures, and identity discourses that span imagined boundaries of rural and urban, past and present.

Herein lies an irony central to capitalism: for communities established primarily as sites of labor, the stability of social life relied on the continued mobility of commodities. Natural resources extraction is place-based, for instance, while the commodification of that resource requires mobility. Minerals and metals are fixed in place in the earth, rendering their extraction and economic valuation reliant on the material and symbolic processes of commodification. Mining requires the commodification, and thus, portability of resources located only in one specific place. At the same time, the extraction, transportation, and processing of those commodities require the stabilization of labor, markets, and nature across extractive and manufacturing nodes of commodity chains. These components of industry “configure differently in site- and time-specific forms, [and] interact with economics and politics as locally and temporally specific activities of society” (Bunker & Ciccantell 2005, p. 7). Thus, the politics of selling commodities requires both place and portability, both motion and moorings (McMillan Lequieu 2017). When the routes of

those commodities are created or altered, those lines of connection to other parts of the world shape place and its social worlds. However, that meaningful bundle of identities, social connections, and memories that make up place does not disappear when economic connections transform. Put otherwise, place—that constellation “of material things that occupy a particular segment of space and have sets of meanings attached to them” by social actors (Cresswell 2008, p.135)—and its power structures often outlive the economic moment that granted the genesis of both.

The four case studies central to this special session highlighted two types of historical expressions of capitalism in the American extraction and manufacture. First, in the cases of midwestern manufacture and extraction, since the social worlds of community life were originally organized around the life of a single industry, the death of that anchor industry threw the logics of quotidian life into question. Second, the Central Appalachian and Mid-Atlantic cases highlighted how patterns and perceptions of land tenure informed how residents rationalized contemporary environmentally and economically risky industries.

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In McMillan Lequieu’s research along the now-defunct iron and steel commodity chain in the American Midwest, the formation of identities of self and group—while certainly inflected by race, gender, age—were first and foremost situated within a deeply capitalistic context. In

both rural and urban cases (northern Wisconsin and southeast Chicago), pre-industrial landscapes were marked more by forests and marshlands, respectively, than by houses and roads. Thus, late 19th and early 20th century companies played the role of employer, community planner, and government. From constructing company houses, to investing in transportation infrastructure, to providing health care, pensions, and pseudo-unions, iron and steel companies materially and symbolically constructed laborer communities as sites centered around the continued success of the firm. Interviews suggested that the legacy of historical relationships continues to shape the narratives of past and present in Wisconsin and Chicago. Because iron and steel companies offered social structures as well as infrastructures, contemporary interviewees—many of whose parents or grandparents had migrated to these rural or urban sites as iron and steelworkers—admire the beneficence of industrial companies to this day. “The mines were so good with the people,” as one rural interviewee said (McMillan Lequieu 2017). Thus, iron and steel companies making place meant that company closure wasn’t just about the loss of good jobs and subsequent economic depression—although those problems also loomed large in interviews. The closure of an anchor company signified a fundamental shift in the way both work and home were experienced in these communities.

Similarly, Pacewicz demonstrated how mid-20th Century urban production economies once structured both community relations and residents’ understandings of civic and political participation. In the two cities in Iowa central to his study, large, locally-owned industries enabled a class of business and labor leaders who were simultaneously engaged in civic groups, local politics, and grassroots organizations for both political parties. This arrangement, which Pacewicz characterizes as politics embedded in community governance, led locals to see community engagement and party politics as synonymous with overdetermined labor-business

conflicts (Pacewicz 2016). He argued that people established reliable and relatively moderate political party identification by using daily life as a guide; indeed, older residents still describe their neighborhoods, former jobs, or even ways of spending leisure time as inherently Republican or Democratic. Pacewicz’s study illuminates how the Rust Belt’s economic transformation promoted the street-level disintegration of traditional party politics. With key community leaders inactive in party politics, the two parties became disembedded from community governance. The two parties, and particularly the GOP, fell into the hand of activists fixated on wedge issues. In the 1980s, corporate mergers thinned the ranks of traditional elites and focused remaining leaders’ attention on nonpartisan efforts to woo outside investment. From the ground up, politics became divorced from economic and civic institutions and embedded instead within a public sphere that alternatively promotes political apathy and amplifies reactionary voices.

Shannon Elizabeth Bell called for greater attention to the historical and ideological roots of local support for environmentally destructive industries. In her recent book, *Fighting King Coal: The Challenges to Micromobilization in Central Appalachia* (MIT Press, 2016), Bell explores the question of why, in the face of widespread environmental and public health harms and a more than five-fold decline in coal-mining jobs, so few coalfield residents join environmental justice organizations seeking to hold the coal industry accountable and bring about a “just transition” in Central Appalachia. Part of the answer, she argues, lies in understanding the influence of certain historical events and processes that have shaped people’s lives and constrained their willingness to speak out against the coal industry. The widespread outmigration that began in the 1950s and continues to today is permanently disrupting valuable social networks in Central Appalachia (Bell 2009; Bell 2016). This ongoing process of depopulation is due to technological advances in coal production over the past 60 years, wherein

coal mines today requires only a fraction of workers once needed for operation. For instance, West Virginia, the top coal-producing state in Appalachia, was able to produce the same amount of coal in the 2000s as it did in the late 1940s, but with one-sixth of the workers (Bell and York 2010). Absentee landownership in Central Appalachia has further exacerbated the demographic effects of these job losses, allow little opportunity for other industries to develop in the region. In the late 1800s, eager capitalists from outside Appalachia descended upon the mountains, grabbing up millions of acres of land and mineral rights at very low prices or stealing the land through legal traps (Gaventa 1978). As Haynes (1997) relates, most local residents had been subsistence farmers up until that point and did not know that the minerals beneath their land were so valuable. In the early 1980s, between 80 and 90 percent of the land in the highest coal-producing counties was owned by absentee landowners (Appalachian Land Ownership Task Force, 1983). Such uneven land tenure meant that huge swaths of Appalachia remained unavailable for development outside of resource extraction. Thus, as one of the many consequences of the mono-economy that was created from this concentration of land, each wave of mine layoffs in the wake of the introduction of more efficient mining technology meant that large portions of the working-age population were forced to migrate outside of the region to find employment. Since 1950, West Virginia alone has seen a net out-migration of nearly 40 percent of its population (Bell and York 2010). Bell (2016) argues that these depopulation processes have powerfully influenced individuals' willingness to speak out—or not speak out—against the coal industry. Since depopulation causes major upheavals in social networks, community relationships and connections that remain in place are absolutely precious to remaining residents. Threatening those relationships by, for instance, joining an environmental group and thus offending one's coal-truck-driving neighbor, can be difficult and risky social maneuver.

“Since depopulation causes major upheavals in social networks, community relationships and connections that remain in place are absolutely precious to remaining residents.”

Finally, Jerolmack's case of local support for shale gas extraction (fracking) in a rural, mixed-income Pennsylvania community similarly illustrates why communities may champion environmentally and economically risky industries. He offers the puzzle of the 'please-in-my-backyard' (PIMBY) phenomenon hinted at throughout the previous three studies—nonmobilization of residents when new, extractive industries express interest in accessing their land. The PIMBY stance contrasts with not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) activism pursued by more privileged communities against new unwanted land uses, which consequentially shifts those land uses to more economically disadvantaged regions. Through ethnography and interviews, Jerolmack found that residents invited gas extraction exploration and development on their land even as personal economic gains were minimal and water contamination was likely. Why would mixed-income Pennsylvanians, then, be not only acquiescent to the transformation of place by capital, with all its hazards, but actively defend landowners' freedom to lease their land to fracking companies? In a forthcoming article in the *American Journal of Sociology*, Jerolmack and his co-author Edward T. Walker (2018) suggest that residents' support of new industry derives from a common devotion to self-reliance, belief that land ought to be productive, and commitment to private property rights.

These four cases offer insight into how the politics of place are residual, stored up in landscapes and local power structures. The two post-industrial cases (McMillan Lequeieu and Pacewicz) highlight the simultaneous persistence and renegotiation of the social worlds which were originally organized around the life of a single industry, while the two studies in contemporary extractive communities (Bell and Jerolmack) reveal the intertwined relationship between land tenure and relationships of power between companies and individuals. Certainly, the processes of capitalism, both historical and contemporary, are highly contingent and case-based, characterized by diverse manifestations of power, conjunctures of causes, and constant renegotiation. Yet across cases, there emerges a patterned process of capitalism creating place through the commodification of land, labor, and the material stuff of economies.

Blame, Quiescence, and Recreating Narrative Orders of Worth

Thinking historically about the relationship between place and economy helps us understand how long-term residents of both post- and current industrial communities assign and withhold blame. By blame, we mean a common, narrative trope of placing responsibility for perceived ills in society. Based on our generative discussion in this Special Session, we contend that both the presence and absence of blame contributes to three similar patterns of narrative control. First, responsibility language seems a consistent strategy for groups which feel misunderstood to create space and recast identity narratives. Extractive and manufacturing industries generate both immense risk and undefined economic potential. When personal and collective identities are entangled in this tension inherent to industrial boom and bust, narratives of blame or acceptance may offer people an opportunity to reclaim their personal story in ways that make sense to them. Second, blame is a form of collective justification, as it offers a shared language through which groups create new definitions of value and “orders of

worth,” to expand Boltanski & Thevenot's (1999) classic line of thought. Landscape-scale economic change, through the establishment of new gas extraction projects, like in Jerolmack's Pennsylvanian case, or through the collapse of a regional commodity chain in the late 20th century, as in McMillan Lequeieu's cases, require residents to redefine what is valuable about their place and its people. Discourses of blame allows narrators to admit the realities and significance of the economic change while yet holding fast to non-economic, moral or ideological statements of worth. Third, narratives of identity and worth often utilize contrasts with other groups. For instance, when speaking to white working-class voters, Trump “aimed to appeal to this group by validating their worth as workers...by removing blame for their downward mobility.” Instead, Trump shifted blame for economic crises onto both broad processes and hyper-local experiences: most typically, globalization and labor competition with “illegal immigrants” (Lamont 2018, pp.422–423).

Community members in each of the four studies of this special session engaged discourses of blame—both othering blame and withholding it—to reclaim identities and re-define their places. In McMillan Lequeieu's former iron and steelworking communities, laborers, their families, and community leaders placed little blame on the companies that once took care of their communities. Even though corporations made—and unmade—their industrial communities for capital, blame was directed not at industrial companies, but at processes of capitalism, writ large, and local governments. Interviewees consistently highlighted the role of amoral, invisible economic forces that enabled the mobility of capital away from their home region. Wayne, in Wisconsin, said, “Well, free trade is not fair trade. What are you going to do? All the big players moved.” And in Chicago, Jose declared, in an oral history, “We get this steel that we get in here from Japan and other countries, cheaper.’ So that's what killed us.” At the same time, many interviewees also blamed state and municipal governments for persistent

disinvestment in their communities. Disenchantment with local (not national) governments centered on very specific issues, such as persistent industrial zoning, the lack of brownfield cleanup or mine entryway protection, and the disintegration of transportation infrastructures. In Wisconsin, Jack complained that his county “didn’t get help when they pulled the rail out...We sure as hell haven’t had any help from the state.” And Tom, a nonprofit organizer, was frustrated that the city of Chicago kept the southeast side zoned industrial even fifty years after the last steel mill shut down: “For the longest time, the City Department of Planning and Development [ignored us]. Just because it’s on a map downtown somewhere that it’s industrial, they thought that’s all we are. We’ve always been the poor stepchild down here, you might say, and the dumping ground.” Both forms of blame emphasized the perceived invisibility and marginalization of the case study communities in the multi-decade wake of company closure.

“Just because it’s on a map downtown somewhere that it’s industrial, they thought that’s all we are. We’ve always been the poor stepchild down here, you might say, and the dumping ground.”

Pacewicz likewise demonstrated how community level transformations altered the collective structures that residents of his communities used to understand economic dislocation. Traditionally, residents in his Iowan cases understood politics in terms of labor and business conflicts. Pacewicz (2016) found that this conflict view remained the dominant political frame for many, at least during the 2008 and 2012 election cycles when he carried out

observations. But, by his time of his fieldwork, community relations were increasingly defined by a community-politics opposition: community institutions were in the hands of leaders oriented towards a cosmopolitan economic development strategy. Their most vocal opponents were political activists, who championed hot button political issues, various sorts of nativism, and—at the time of his fieldwork—particularly Christian conservative positions like celebration of traditional marriage and hostility towards the gay rights movement. Thus, an implicit understanding of these community patterns resonated with an incipient populism, with many residents espousing various reactionary positions and consequentially blaming an out of touch elite for their troubles. He argued that Rust Belt’s political shifts are due partially to a vacuum of community organization and public recognition, a delayed, and continuing, consequence of the region’s economic transformation.

Bell (2016) explicates the puzzling pattern of quiescence, rather than blame, in her case. She argues that not only do structural factors affect Central Appalachians’ support for the coal industry, but there are long-lasting cultural consequences emanating from the persistence of negative stereotypes about Appalachian people. In innumerable pop culture representations—from films to television shows to children’s books to comic strips, Appalachia has, for more than 100 years, been portrayed (incorrectly) as a monolithically white, isolated frontier “filled with uneducated, backward, and violent ‘hillbillies’...whose impoverishment is a result of their deficient culture” (Bell 2016, p.15). Herbert Reid and Betsy Taylor (2010), among others, have argued that popular depictions of Appalachia as “premodern” or “savage” have led to the normalization of violent practices like mountaintop removal mining in the region. Furthermore, as sociologist Rebecca Scott (2010) argues, these stereotypes have also left many Appalachians in a position of feeling the need to prove their worth as American citizens; and essentially, the only thing that they have been told by the rest of the nation that’s of

value in their mountains is their coal. Thus, supporting the coal industry is viewed by many as being essential for earning the respect of their fellow Americans.

Finally, Jerolmack's contemporary case of fracking in northern Pennsylvania sheds light on how residents' firm commitment to a Lockian view of property rights and devotion to self-reliance has been translated into a cynicism toward 'outsiders.' Not only does a community-scale lack of confidence in the federal government preclude endorsing environmental regulation, but a common perception of antifracking activists as "liberal" outsiders brought in to trouble local autonomy actually increases community solidarity in support of fracking. This case illustrates why communities may blame outsiders in order to actively champion risky industries.

Tracing narratives of blame and quiescence in these working-class communities grants insight into how people themselves recognize or create recognition gaps between themselves and others. Indeed, narratives of blame do productive work for people who perceive themselves as marginalized and othered themselves. Blame or active support offers members a "discursive" narrative which they can control in the face of notable economic and social change. And these narratives, we argue, tend to be largely non-economic, centering on the moorings of stable, place-based life rather than the motions of commodities (McMillan Lequieu 2017).

Conclusion

To understand emotions of marginalization, mobilization, or lack of recognition in the American Rust Belt, we argue for a deeply historical analysis of how actors and processes shape specific communities in the image of capitalism and, consequentially, how and why people in those communities engage non-economic logics of value to make sense of their contested landscapes. In addition to these theoretical observations, this Special Session highlighted what can be gained from cross-case

comparisons across time and space, rural and urban contexts, and theoretical and methodological frameworks. Bell and Jerolmack looked at patterns of contemporary quiescence and nonmobilization in contemporary, rural extractive locations, while Pacewicz centered on urban post-manufacturing communities, and McMillan Lequieu considered deindustrialization across both rural and urban nodes of a commodity chain. All four scholars engaged some ethnography and interview-based research; Pacewicz used network analysis and McMillan Lequieu leaned more heavily into comparative historical research. Yet all four studies shed light on the complexities of individual and collective experiences of political engagement, cultural marginalization, and the emotions of economic gain and loss.

By grappling with how economic processes shape non-economic, social relations and thus, how long-term residents of both past and current industrial communities need to reconceptualize blame and responsibility, sociologists can trace both the case-specific and processual mechanisms of recognition gaps, cultural marginalization, and contemporary political economies in the American Rust Belt.

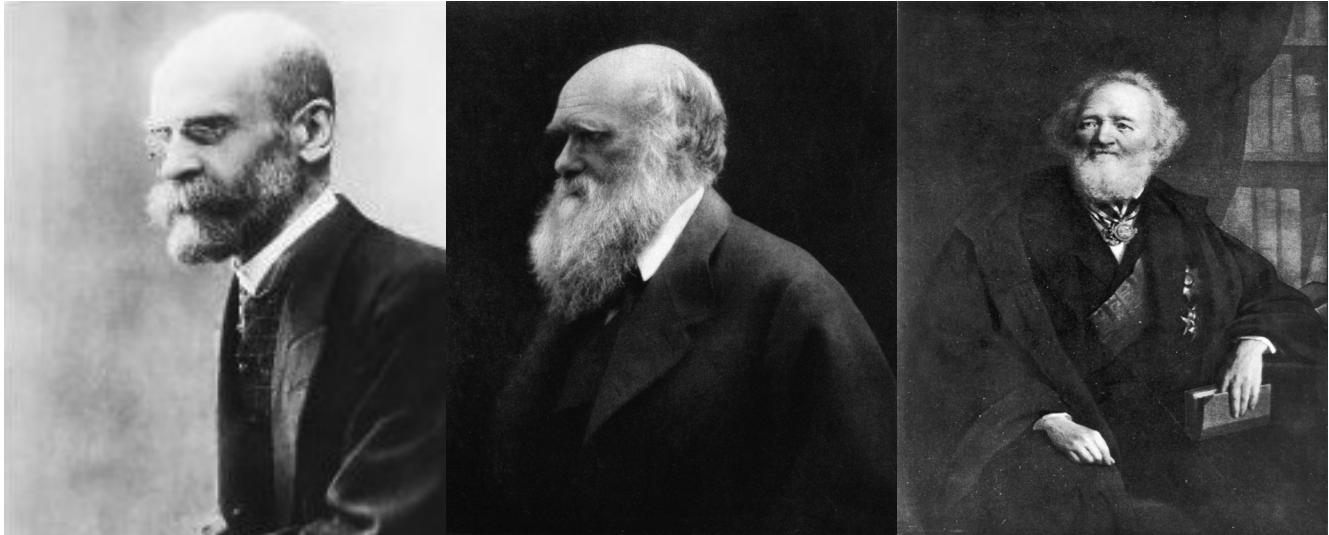
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Durkheim, Darwin, and Ranke: Disciplining the Scientific Self

by Herman Paul, Leiden University



Introduction

There was a time, or so the story goes, when research ethics did not yet exist. It came into being only after World War II, in response to the gruesome practice of Nazi doctors subjecting prisoners in concentration camps to dangerous medical experiments. Initially, research ethics took the form of a ten-point declaration named after the city where Karl Brandt and 22 other Nazi doctors were sentenced by a military tribunal for their involvement in human experimentation. This Nuremberg Code (1947), in turn, became the basis for subsequent codes of ethics, such as the Declaration of Helsinki (1964) and the International Ethical Guidelines for Biomedical Research Involving Human Subjects (1993). The emergence of research ethics as we currently know it can thus be dated quite precisely: in the immediate aftermath of World War II, in the context of the Nuremberg Trials.

This story, told with minor variations in countless textbooks in research ethics, is a typical example of a “disciplinary history,” that

is, “an account of the alleged historical development of an enterprise the identity of which is defined by the concerns of the current practitioners of a particular scientific field” (Collini 1988: 388). Its presentism is most visible in its close identification of research ethics and codes of conduct. This identification may seem reasonable in a time when ethics is frequently associated with codes and protocols. It conceals, however, that the history of research ethics is much richer than the history of its codification, and that it stretches further back in time than textbooks want us to believe.

This paper draws attention to one particular strand of this longer, richer history. Zooming in on the “scientific self,” that is, the historically contingent sets of habits, dispositions, virtues, or competencies that scientists consider important for the pursuit of scientific research, the paper argues that the scientific self is an embodied articulation of what scientists at a given time and place regard as good, responsible research. With examples from across the scientific spectrum (sociology, biology, history), the paper shows,

more specifically, that the scientific self offers us a glimpse of research ethics in non-codified form – a form of ethics that is less stable, more contested, and therefore at least as interesting as the Nuremberg Code or the Declaration of Helsinki to the extent that it translates abstract ethical demands into concrete human character traits (1).

Three Classics

To recognize the key importance of the scientific self, it suffices to revisit nineteenth-century classics such as Émile Durkheim's *Les règles de la méthode sociologique* (The Rules of Sociological Method, 1895), Charles Darwin's *On the Origins of Species* (1859), and Leopold Ranke's *Zur Kritik neuerer Geschichtschreiber* (Critique of Modern Historians, 1824). What these manifesto-like texts had in common is that they sought to change science (or at least, a particular province of science) by changing the scientist. The “scientific revolution” they advocated was, first and foremost, a revolution within the self.

Take the opening pages of Darwin's *Origins*, where the author explained at length how cautiously he had tried to avoid vices of “haste” and “preconceived opinion.” The self-image Darwin rhetorically constructed was one revolving around “dispassionate judgment” and “flexibility of mind.” In Victorian England, this could be read as an attempt to assure skeptical readers that Darwin's research adhered to traditional scientific method. But as Thomas Huxley clearly saw, open-mindedness and independence of judgment could also be interpreted as markers of a new scientific persona. For Huxley, indeed, it was precisely his independence of thought that made Darwin “the incorporated ideal of a man of science” – a man who served science instead of society, made no attempts to please traditional authorities, and relied on his own findings instead of on the opinions of others (White 2003).

Ranke, too, advocated a new scientific persona in subjecting early modern historians like

Francesco Guiccardini to methodological criticism. His attempt to show that Guiccardini and other highly respected Renaissance historians had been guilty of “forgery of truth” and “modification of facts” served a revolutionary cause. It demonstrated the need for a new type of historian, more “critical” and “trustworthy” than his predecessors. If it took a while before Ranke was generally accepted as an embodiment of this new type of historian, this was because alternative conceptions of the scientific self, defended by Heinrich Leo and Friedrich Christoph Schlosser, among others, did not immediately disappear. Indeed, within German historical scholarship, Ranke's favorite virtues – “criticism,” “precision,” and “penetration” – never ceased to be criticized. Partly because of political and religious fault lines, the virtues of a good historian remained a subject on which historians could fiercely disagree (Paul 2017b).

This, of course, was also Durkheim's experience. The “objectivity” that the French sociologist famously advocated in *Les règles de la méthode sociologique* was intended as a remedy to “naivety,” “speculation,” “dogmatism,” and “the promptings of common sense.” Given Durkheim's interest in Francis Bacon, this list of vices could easily be interpreted as a nineteenth-century update of Bacon's *idola mentis* (“idols of the mind”). In fact, however, “objectivity” was the programmatic name that Durkheim claimed for a way of doing sociology that sharply distinguished itself from how Herbert Spencer, Auguste Comte, and Gabriel Tarde practiced sociology. Durkheim's catalog of virtues and vices had a polemical intent: it favored a type of scientist who privileged data collection over theoretical speculation and factual knowledge over grand theory (Gane 1988).

Language of Virtue and Vice

Apparently, then, the scientific self was central to the scientific revolutions that Ranke, Darwin, and Durkheim sought to unleash. New methods or approaches required new types of scientists.

Even if the virtues or dispositions characteristic of those new personae were not always new – “objectivity” was a nineteenth-century virtue, but “criticism” and “impartiality” had histories that stretched back to at least the seventeenth century – their specific constellations (what was the “highest” virtue that a scientist had to embody?) and connotations (what exactly did “critical” mean?) served the purpose of creating new scientific personae.

This not only happened at mountain peak level, in the foundational texts of scientific disciplines. (The publication of Ranke’s 1824 book, at least, has traditionally been interpreted as the “birth” of modern historiography.) Language of virtue and vice permeated scientific discourse at all levels. We find it in book reviews, in which scientists judged each other’s work against standards of virtue. We find it in letters of recommendation, where candidates for academic positions were presented as models of virtue (or, occasionally, as unable to resist temptations of vice). Most notably, we find it in controversies in which scientists failed to reach agreement over what, in a particular context, counted as virtue or vice (Paul 2017a).

Interestingly, emerging attempts to rewrite the history of nineteenth-century science through the prism of virtues and vices reveal different patterns of consensus and conflict than those offered in standard narratives of “professionalization.” On one hand, nineteenth-century scientists nearly universally believed that research made demands on dispositions known as virtues. On the other hand, they found it particularly difficult to agree on what were the most important virtues, partly because many of these virtues, “objectivity” included, had not only epistemic connotations, but religious and political layers of meaning, too (Paul 2017b).

So, even for historians without specific interest in how the history of science intersects with the history of research ethics, virtues and vices in nineteenth-century scientific discourse are a promising subject of inquiry. They draw

attention to the important role of the scientific self, to contested standards of scholarship, and to disciplinary sub-communities identifying with different scientific personae.

Disciplining the Self

The ethical dimensions of all this become most clearly visible if we look not just at scientific discourse, but also at how standards of virtue and vice are translated into practice – into lecturing, supervising, and mentoring, for instance. Educational practices were important for at least two reasons. One reason is that Ranke and Durkheim sought to socialize students into a scientific ethos consistent with their conceptions of the scientific self. Ranke trained young historians in his “historical exercises” (*historische Übungen*) – an informal seminar where students discussed primary sources and presented draft papers – while Durkheim mentored younger colleagues through his *Année sociologique*. Although Darwin’s case is slightly different, Huxley (“Darwin’s bulldog”) believed scientific education to require identification figures and therefore presented Darwin as embodying “the ideal according to which [students] must shape their lives” (Huxley 1885: 535).

A second reason why education mattered is that Ranke, Darwin, and Durkheim agreed on the natural viciousness of the human mind. Just as Darwin elaborated on “the chief cause of our natural unwillingness” to accept new ideas, Durkheim lamented the mind’s “natural disposition to fail to recognize” various kinds of bias. All authors therefore insisted on the need for “rigorous discipline,” with all the Foucauldian connotations of that phrase: “Only sustained and special practice can prevent such shortcomings” (Durkheim 1895).

It is in educational practices like Ranke’s historical exercises that such disciplining of selves becomes most visible. It is here that students were being molded into scientists, learned to develop scientific habits, and were taught how to suppress their “prescientific

selves” for the sake of objectivity. Historians of science have good reason to examine the following questions: How did this work? To what extent were virtues actually taught? What happened to students who failed to conform to those standards of virtue? We have been pursuing these questions through a project entitled “The Scholarly Self” at Leiden University.

Conclusion

To what extent does the concern for scientific selves and their defining qualities belong to the history of research ethics? If we follow recent historians of medical ethics and expand research ethics to include all “moral economies of science” (e.g., Baker 2013), it becomes possible to imagine a history of research ethics prior to the Nuremberg Code. More importantly, it becomes possible to acknowledge the existence of other ethically relevant genres than that of codes of conduct. The result, most likely, will be a history of research ethics that is more complicated, and arguably more interesting, than the standard narrative told in research ethical textbooks. However, it will take time for the contours of this history to become visible: much research still needs to be done on research ethics prior to World War II.

Focusing on the nineteenth century, this paper seeks to make a modest contribution to such an expanded history of research ethics by arguing that scientists reflecting on the virtues of the scientific self were engaged in research ethics *avant la lettre*. In defining good science, in specifying what this demanded of the scientific self, and in translating these demands into educational programs, they were as seriously engaged in implementing ethical standards as their twentieth-century successors were in drafting, revising, and implementing codes of conduct.

Acknowledgments

A longer version of this paper, entitled “The Scientific Self: Reclaiming Its Place in the History of Research Ethics,” will appear in *Science and Engineering Ethics*. Funding was provided by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO).

Note

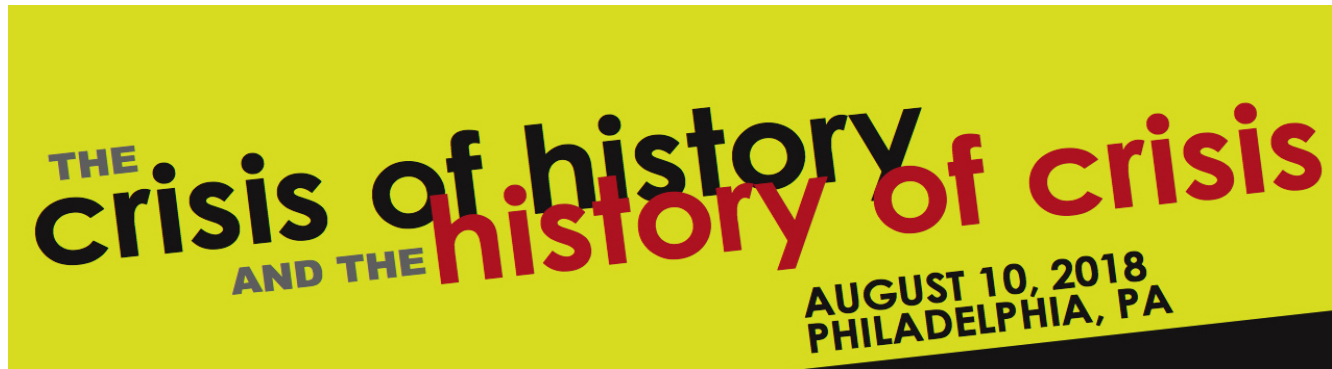
(1) Following nineteenth-century usage, this paper uses “science” in the broadest possible sense, also encompassing the social sciences and humanities.

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A Critical History of the Mini-Conference

by Simeon J. Newman, University of Michigan



Only with considerable hindsight can certain series of events be seen as crises—or, for that matter, as successes. The same can be said for the ASA Comparative-Historical Sociology Section’s 2018 miniconference, “The Crisis of History and the History of Crisis,” held at the University of Pennsylvania on 10 August 2018, the day before the ASA Annual Meeting began. Kim Voss (2016-2017 Section Chair) and George Steinmetz (2017-2018 Section Chair) beckoned sociologists and fellow travelers to engage the theme of crisis in their widely-circulated call for abstracts. Two plenary sessions, comprised of seven prominent speakers, spoke on the themes of crises in higher education and crises in society at large, respectively. Some of the authors of the papers in the breakaway sessions—who hailed from several countries—also addressed the conference theme. And some of the 90 attendees who registered, and probably some of the many others who stopped in, also talked about it. One historical sociologist thought the theme was “too abstract”; others were excited about it. Although it is still too early to settle that question decisively, we can, nevertheless, recap the event.

The opening plenary featured three speakers all of whom discussed crises in U.S. higher education. Clyde W. Barrow (Political Science, University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley) presented a sweeping, theoretically-driven

history of higher education as it relates to U.S. capitalism. Drawing from his voluminous research on the topic and from work currently in progress, he recounted how the U.S. university system was initially modeled on the railroad industry, giving it its terminology and organizational form (university “majors” were modeled on the “major” railroad lines connecting key destinations) and setting it off on a dismal quest to organize intellectual life in a way that is consistent with capitalist industry. The problem, of course, was that there is no good way of doing that. So this initiative metamorphosed into a political campaign to convert higher education whole cloth into a business. The campaign had periods of greater and lesser success according to the presence or absence of acute crises in the enveloping political economy and as modified by “faculty rebellions.” By around 1990, Barrow argues, they won: there is no longer any way for faculty to fight against this initiative from within university institutions with any prospect other than defeat followed by defeat.

The solution, Barrow argued, is “mass direct action in which faculty directly seize control of what Marx called the means of intellectual production” in order to replace the “corporate university” with the “syndicalist university.” In support of the viability of this approach he argued that use of extra-institutional channels

has been immensely successful at producing changes thought to be out of reach at his own institution. The intellectual justification for the syndicalist university comes from the labor theory of value and the observation that students pay to go to university because of the faculty (not because they want to finance bloated administrations). Nevertheless, the landmark Supreme Court decision, *Trustees of Dartmouth College v. Woodward* (1819), placed control in the hands of the board of trustees, barring faculty power. This is the main legal impediment to establishing what Barrow described as his third-way Proudhonian alternative to both capitalism and communism according to which the university would be a worker enterprise.

Rather than speak directly to that proposal or its alternatives, the other panelists opened up new vistas. Michael Bérubé (English, Pennsylvania State University) engaged the problem of the shifting boundary between academic freedom and professors' extramural expression, drawing from his deep experience working for academic workers' rights and his years serving on the American Association of University Professors' Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure. He challenged the view that faculty's extramural speech can threaten academic freedom by arguing that academic freedom is ultimately based on the freedom of extramural speech. He concluded that we are not facing a bona fide crisis of academic freedom, but rather a national crisis precipitated by the ascendancy of a "fascist" and white nationalism, but also warned that the extramural-speech foundations for academic freedom are perilously shifting beneath our feet.

Kim Voss (Sociology, UC Berkeley) drew from her current research and her front-row-seat experience as the Associate Dean of the Graduate Division to call the very idea of crisis of higher education into question insofar as *students* are concerned. She observed that due to low graduation rates, U.S. higher education is reinforcing inequality rather than undermining it. However, she noted, this is not so much an acute

"crisis" as an enduring structure. Educational opportunity was not more equal before government policy threw its weight behind private colleges nor before publics were privatized. Since there was no golden age, it cannot have entered into crisis; insofar as thinking in terms of crisis assumes a golden age, it therefore obscures the real problems. Voss described her work on how crises are constructed in the media, and left attendees with the question of whether there are ways to conceptualize crisis that do not assume the status quo ante was preferable.

Of the 94 paper abstracts submitted, 40 were accepted and divided into eight panels spanning the themes of Constructing Crisis (for which Julia Adams served as discussant), Cities and Households in Crisis (Zaire Dinzey-Flores), Crisis and Contentious Organizing (Eric Schoon), Southern Solutions (Melissa Wilde), Economic Change and Crisis (Anthony Chen), The State and/in Crisis (Richard Lachmann), Crises of Democracy (James Mahoney), and Crises and Mobilization (Charles Kurzman). Since papers broke new ground on fundamental questions about geopolitics and hegemony, democracy and nationalism, urbanization and contention, among many other topics, discussion could not be contained to the break-out sessions.

During the conference's second plenary, four speakers ranged nearly as widely as the papers in addressing the topic of "The Age of Crisis." George Steinmetz (Sociology, University of Michigan) made the case that crisis has been central to the discipline of sociology since its inception, returning to a theme he raised in his essay on the topic earlier in the year in which he observes that "most of the European disciplinary founders of sociology construed their new science in terms of crisis" (<http://chs.asa-comparative-historical.org/the-crisis-of-history/>). This, he argued, is desirable. "Crisis"—etymologically a cognate of "critique"—resists enlistment to undesirable projects of value-free social science. Following Koselleck, Steinmetz observed, crises also imply

contingency and indeterminacy. Focusing on them can therefore help prevent us from undertaking an ill-advised search for law-like regularities.

Elisabeth S. Clemens (Sociology, University of Chicago) discussed crisis via an engagement with the political theorist of crisis, Edmund Burke. Also picking up on the theme of indeterminacy, she conceived of crises as times when our theories no longer guide us, and asked how we ought to comport ourselves as social thinkers and researchers during such times. The very nature of crisis is that we cannot predict the future importance of our research: with the resolution of crisis, the topic of our research may cease to be important to many people or may seem urgent to nearly everyone. She suggested that there is a considerable amount of luck at play during such times, insofar as research careers are concerned, but also that intensive study of crises when they are underway may provide one with the best compass we can hope for and may also help us sharpen our theories.

Robin Wagner-Pacifici (Sociology, New School for Social Research) delivered an avowedly contemporary U.S.-centric talk, exploring phenomenologically a series of four binaries that, she argued, are unfortunately increasingly meaningless in the age of Trump. She drew metaphors from physics—referencing the “political black hole” in which, she opined, the U.S. currently finds itself—and probed for structural-linguistic moorings. Ultimately, she found the search a disappointment. While it may or may not have been intentional, in opting for a conceptualization of crisis that did not embrace contingency (an analytic point of departure at odds with the dominant interpretation of the conference theme) and in ultimately concluding that “the right metaphor is eluding me,” she suggested that anti-deterministic analytic approaches may be the only viable ones for theorizing crisis.

Isaac Reed (Sociology, University of Virginia) engaged the theme of crisis from the vantage

point of the problem of power. In his wide-ranging discussion covering some of the topics of his book-in-progress, he pivoted on the Schmittian-Agambian notion of the “state of exception.” By cashing this out as “the representation of violence as correct action,” his remarks helped in the urgent task of synthetic theorization that can encompass, without reducing to, the current crisis of the U.S. political establishment. At a time when the U.S. is so clearly not exceptional vis-à-vis broader historical patterns—at least insofar as states of exception are even comparable—and when U.S. politics tack into terrain that historical sociologists are best equipped to grapple with, this foray was most welcome.

One hopes that historical sociologists will continue such ambitious synthetic endeavors at future conferences and in other venues such as the *Critical Historical Sociology Blog*. One implicit theme threading through much of the conference was the problematic political commitments of those often considered the best interlocutors for theorizing crisis. While historical sociologists and social theorists are not usually attracted to conservative thought, it seems that confronted with the task of theorizing crisis, such perspectives were most compelling. If this is true, why that might be the case, what its alternatives might be, and how they compare would seem to be worthwhile topics for further debate. The Marxist tradition, many of whose thinkers have engaged the theme of crisis extensively, is an obvious elephant in the room.

It is hoped that, with hindsight, both the conference organizers—Barış Büyükokutan, Luis Flores, Simeon J. Newman, Tasleem Padamsee, Eric Schoon, George Steinmetz, Kim Voss, and Melissa Wilde—and attendees will consider the conference a success. It would not have been possible without the material support of several sponsors: the sociology departments of the University of California, Berkeley, University of Pennsylvania, Ohio State University, and University of Michigan, and the ASA CHS Section.

A Successful Mentorship Event

2018 ASA Annual Meeting



Jennifer Triplett
University of Michigan

Johnnie Lotesta
Brown University

Ricarda Hammer
Brown University

Sara Tomczuk
University of Washington

At the ASA Annual Meeting this past August, the Comparative and Historical Sociology section (CHS) partnered again with the Global and Transnational Sociology section (GTS) to put on a mentorship event for graduate students and postdocs. This year's event was held at Aqimero, a restaurant housed in the lobby of the Ritz-Carlton, just steps from Philadelphia's historic City Hall. There were nearly ninety participants, including 23 professors, 10 postdocs, and 55 graduate students. Both sections offered financial support, and GTS generously provided extra funds to sponsor registration fees for a number of graduate students and non-tenured faculty.

The two-hour event began with open-ended mingling over drinks and hors d'oeuvres,

providing an opportunity for faculty and students to meet and network freely. Attendees then divided into seventeen small groups organized by substantive interests for more pointed conversation with assigned faculty mentors. This year's attendees represented the great vibrancy and intellectual diversity of both sections, covering topics such as nationalism and violence, culture and memory, social movements, political economy, and welfare states. Huddled around cocktail rounds and nestled into plush armchairs, participants discussed the intersections of their research programs, the ins-and-outs of publication, tips and tricks for fieldwork, and the experiences that have shaped their careers. As Cata Vallejo Pedraza, a participating graduate student from the University of Virginia recounted,

"I was paired with a wonderful faculty that not only cares about the same theoretical questions but who also does research on Latin America. He provided guidance on how to keep a dialogue with experts in the region and those who provided help with fieldwork."

Kristin Foringer, a graduate student participant from the University of Michigan, expressed appreciation for the opportunity to meet new



colleagues and gratitude for the faculty members who volunteered their time. In her own words,

"This mentoring event was really useful to me as a first-time ASA attendee in particular since it provided a great "face-to-name" opportunity to meet several scholars in my subfield along with graduate students at different schools doing similar research to me. I am also very grateful to the scholars who were generous with their time and really wanted to spend an hour or two in conversation with graduate students looking to follow similar trajectories as them both research- and career-wise."

Fiona Greenland, Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Virginia, remarked on the variety of topics that her small group of faculty and students discussed, as well as the hope she has for continued collaboration of this variety among students and professors. As she explains,

"The mentoring event did a great job of bringing together PhD students and faculty members, all at various career stages and linked by shared interests in comparative and historical sociology. In our group we tackled questions about the job market, sustainable writing habits, big data archival work, and how the field has changed in the last 10 years. It was a vibrant mix of the pragmatic and existential, with a collective sense of investment in each other's work. I know it's

trite to say things like, 'The future of the discipline is bright.' But in this case it's true, and it all comes down to sustained engagement with cutting-edge theory and comparative methods that reach beyond conventional spaces and time periods."

Since its inception in 2013, the mentorship event has become a CHS-GTS tradition as both sections seek to recruit and support young scholars. The event originated at the initiative of then-GTS Chair Julia Adams, who recruited Chris Muller and Nick Wilson to organize the event in partnership with CHS. This first event involved a sit-down luncheon generously sponsored by Yale Sociology. Event organizers experimented with multiple formats in subsequent years, and the event evolved into a happy hour format with both structured conversation and informal mingling. Thanks to the organizing efforts of Damon Mayrl, Chris Muller, Nick Wilson and Richard Lachmann, mentorship events were held at each of the 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 Annual Meetings.

The success of the mentorship event over the years and its significance to section members are made evident in the statements of participating faculty and students. As CHS Treasurer and former mentorship event organizer Damon Mayrl states,

"I think this is a great event for building contacts



and solidarity within the section, and for passing on professional knowledge and tricks of the trade to a new generation of historical sociologists. It was very helpful for me as a graduate student and very enjoyable to participate in as a mentor this past year. It's been particularly gratifying to see how many section members have actively inquired about serving as mentors over the years."

CHS Chair Fatma Müge Göçek remarked similarly about this year's event,

"This was a most productive event not only for graduate students and junior professors to network and receive academic guidance, but for like-minded senior professors to get to [know] each other as well. I thank CHS for organizing it and hope it gets repeated in the future."

We are pleased to announce that Council voted to dedicate a new line to support mentorship events in future years. As student participants in the event ourselves, we wish to thank the faculty who volunteered their time and registration fees, the section Chairs and Council members who helped with recruitment and offered financial support, and, of course, our fellow graduate students who shared their interest and enthusiasm. In the words of Michael Kennedy,

incoming GTS Chair, "The mentorship event was remarkable for a number of reasons, not least of which was to find colleagues earlier in their career who shared so many interests. If knowledge networks matter, CHS/GTS mentoring is a winner!"

All bias aside, we share Michael's enthusiasm and look forward to future mentorship events to come.

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Comparative-Historical Sociology Section Announcements



Melissa Wilde featured in *Give Methods a Chance* Podcast

Click [here](#) to check out the conversation with Section member Melissa Wilde (University of Pennsylvania), featured in the podcast series *Give Methods a Chance*.

Focusing on comparative-historical methods, Melissa Wilde reflects on the questions of generalizability, the author's responsibility for how and who uses the published research, and

how the methodological approach can unsettle many of our preconceived notions of modern culture, including religious divides around race, gender, and fertility.

Give Methods a Chance is a podcast devoted to research methods in practice, created by Kyle Green (Utica College) and Sarah Lageson (Rutgers University-Newark). The podcast features conversations with top scholars on a multitude of approaches to answer important questions and share stories about their experiences studying the social world.

If you are interested in participating in the series, contact Kyle Green and Sarah Lageson at givemethodsachance@gmail.com.

Recent Publication

Buck, Andrew and Jeffrey K. Hass. (2018) "Coalitional Configurations: A Structural Analysis of Democratization in the Former Soviet Union." *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*, 26(1): 25-54.